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NOVELETTE

THE HAND OF SAINT URY . . . . . Gordon MacCreagh 12
An old theory has it that a thought of hate can be a powerful enough force to persist after the death of its originator.

SHORT STORIES

THE SIXTH GARGOYLE . . . . . David Eynon 34
For the occupant of the fifth grave the choice fell between two men—the murderer himself, or the fifth of his victims.

THE FISHERMAN AT CRESCENT BEACH . . . . . Allan Masterson 39
The girl was gone and there was only the empty sea. And the fisherman—hunched and silent, unmoving, unnoticing—and the gulls over head.

SOMETHING FROM OUT THERE . . . . . August Derleth 50
". . . it was by accident that we three students stumbled on a strange chapter of occult lore that would have been much better hidden."

PROFESSOR KATE . . . . . Margaret St. Clair 59
It wasn't the dead ones the boy feared; but Kate felt the living were guided by them.

THE OLD GENTLEMAN WITH THE SCARLET UMBRELLA . . Frank Owen 64
The old gentleman was quite merry and harmless—that is if the bite of a sand-vampire is harmless.

THE UNWANTED . . . . . Elizabeth Counselman 68
Eleven children were to be listed for Uncle Sam in that high mountain cabin.
Yet were they really there?

SCOPE . . . . . Allison V. Harding 76
The one thing that had actually happened the scientists had never expected—that they would be unable to interpret what they saw in the great and secret lens.

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VERSE

FOR A SEA LOVER . . . . . Dorothy Quick 49

MY TIMID SOUL . . . . . Page Cooper 63

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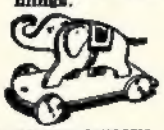
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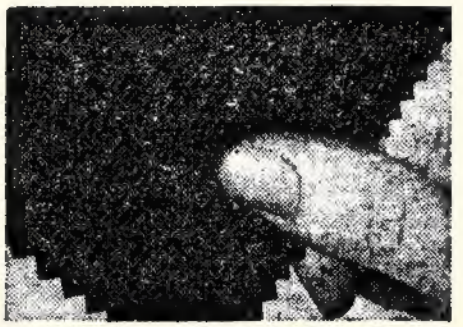

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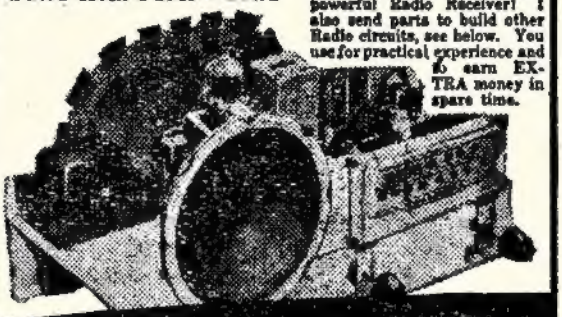

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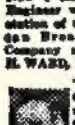

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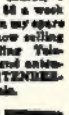

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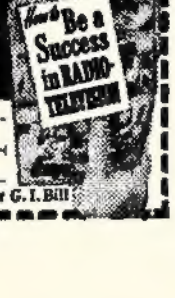

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The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

I've been reading WEIRD TALES *for over three years, but I've never sent a letter to the Eyrie; however, there's always a first time and this is it.*

The main reason for this shattering of precedent is to laud Frank Kelly Freas, whose November cover painting is a true work of art. After being nauseated time after time by the garish monstrosities which your competitors see fit to adorn their magazines with, such a magnificent cover is a sight for sore eyes. Any "slick" magazine would find it difficult—if not impossible—to dig up a cover from its files to match that November masterpiece.

The first paragraph leads nicely into the second reason for penning this epistle, namely: in the past you have had several really excellent covers; now a magazine is a fragile thing at best, and after a few years of rereading the covers tend to tear and fade. Why not reproduce your best cover illustrations on a good grade of paper, in full color, and in a size suitable for framing? I think it is a pretty good idea, even if I do say so myself!

My third reason for writing this letter is this: I'm as much a science-fiction fan as the next fellow, and I buy and read all the publications devoted to this branch of fantasy; but WEIRD TALES *is not the place for science-fiction.*

My fourth reason is the customary one: to comment on the stories. Mr. Leiber is

(*Continued on page* 11)

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You Can Influence Others With Your Thinking!

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Demonstrable Facts

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THE EYRIE

(*Continued from page 6*)

always welcome; his yarn is tied for first place with Miss Counselman's excellent "Something Old." Seabury Quinn, one of my favorite writers, gets second place only because his idea was a bit old—an excellent story, however. Let's have more of Jules de Grandin. I'm glad to see Mr. Derleth coming back—if anyone deserves to follow in the footsteps of the great H. P. L., it is he.

Brian McNaughton,
198 *Bergen Place, Red Bank, New Jersey*

The idea about cover reproductions is a good one—of course. But if we charged enough for a picture suitable for framing to cover the cost of a set of color plates—we'd have a hard time finding buyers. EDITOR, WEIRD TALES.

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

The omission of Science-Fiction from your November issue made me an even stronger supporter of WEIRD TALES *but Elizabeth Counselman's "Something Old" has definitely made amends for any of your past weaknesses! Her story smacked familiarly of your 1939 standards.*

"Grotesquerie" and "The Dead Man" are additional bonuses which make for the best reading under one cover that I've seen in many years. You don't have to improve—just maintain your November standards!!

Fantastically yours,
Thomas S. Palmer,
New York City

•

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

I notice several letters in your last issue mention the controversy of fantasy fiction versus science fiction. I've been reading WEIRD TALES *for years and it is my favorite magazine, so I'd like to voice my opinion.*

I like science fiction and read it, but not until I have exhausted my supply of fantasy. Science fiction is available in many magazines but there are very few fantasy ones.

WEIRD TALES *is tops in the fantasy field. I'd like to see it keep to that.*

**I wish the magazine could be put out more often.*

Mary Ross,
P. O. Box 898
Poughkeepsie, New York

*So do we. EDITOR WEIRD TALES.

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

I know that one generally hesitates before criticizing another's work but I am of the more or less accepted opinion that horror writers of today have, how shall I say it, "run dry." The reservoirs of sheer fictional terror of such outstanding authors as Seabury Quinn, Harold Lawlor, H. Russell Wakefield and others has apparently run temporarily arid.

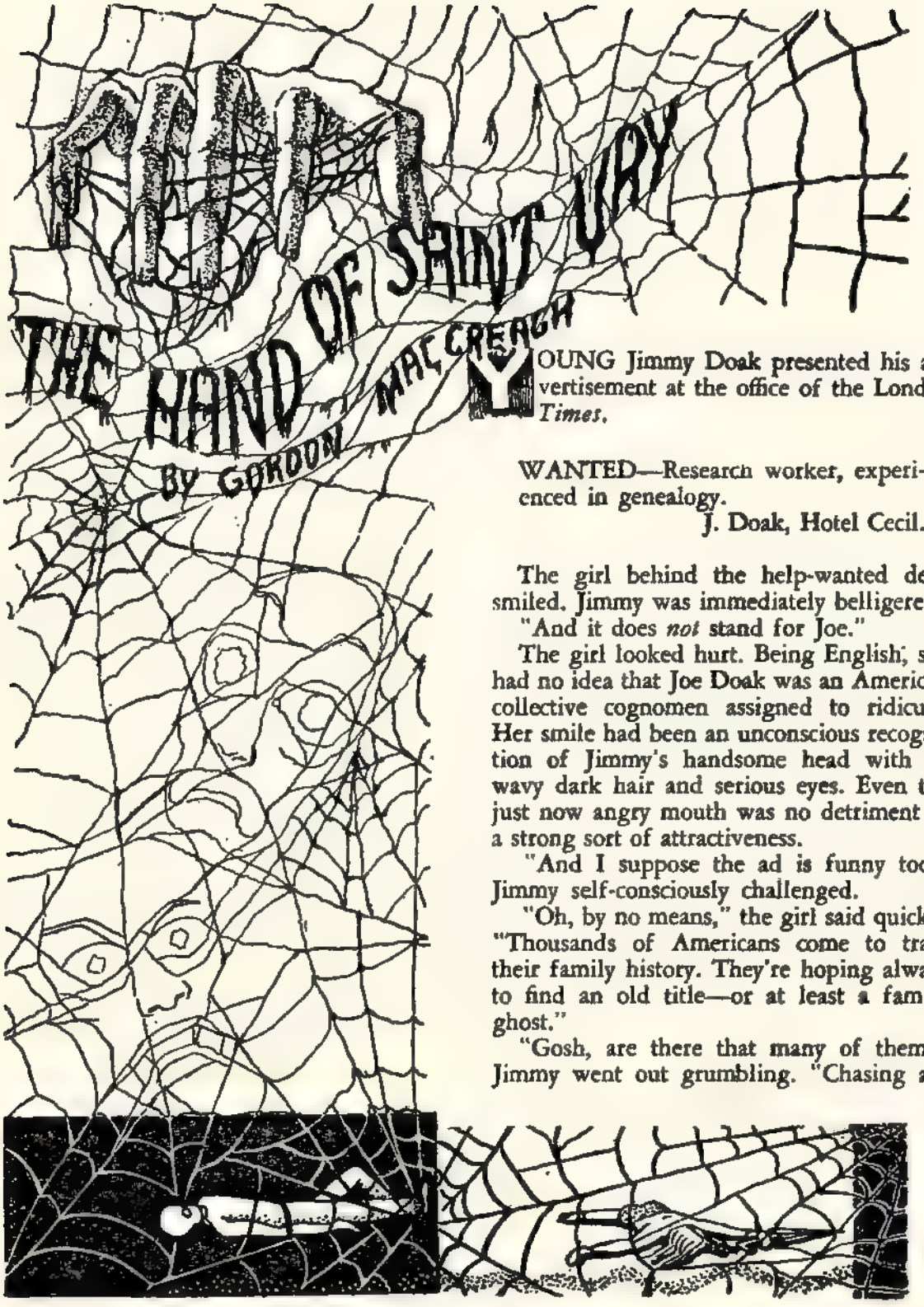
Let us have a rebirth of the unknown and ultimate in supernatural; let us have some stories that will cling to our memory attic and chill us to the very marrow of our bones; let the average reader toss a quarter on the magazine counter with flippancy, realizing that he is getting much more out of the magazine than any amount of financial reimbursement will bring . . . let our attitude change from cool to ghoul!

Gordon L. Gillmore,
1505 *S. 92nd Street*
Seattle 8, Washington

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

Here's to better and even more horrible stories. I am a strong fan of Lovecraft's type of writing. I go for the very horrible and the very thrilling type of story. Lovecraft, Smith, Bloch and Derleth are tops. Please give us more.

Fantastically,
Roger Nelson,
San Diego, California



YOUNG Jimmy Doak presented his advertisement at the office of the London *Times*.

WANTED—Research worker, experienced in genealogy.
J. Doak, Hotel Cecil.

The girl behind the help-wanted desk smiled. Jimmy was immediately belligerent.

"And it does *not* stand for Joe."

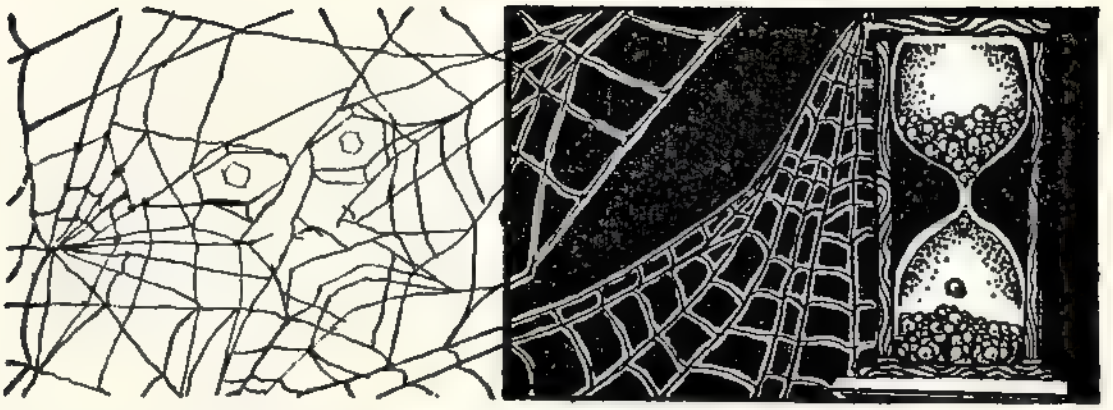
The girl looked hurt. Being English, she had no idea that Joe Doak was an American collective cognomen assigned to ridicule. Her smile had been an unconscious recognition of Jimmy's handsome head with its wavy dark hair and serious eyes. Even the just now angry mouth was no detriment to a strong sort of attractiveness.

"And I suppose the ad is funny too?" Jimmy self-consciously challenged.

"Oh, by no means," the girl said quickly. "Thousands of Americans come to trace their family history. They're hoping always to find an old title—or at least a family ghost."

"Gosh, are there that many of them?" Jimmy went out grumbling. "Chasing an-

Heading by Charles A. Kennedy



tique families. I'd rather chase antiques."

Which is just what he went and did. It was in a little lost end of an alley off Marrowbone Road that he found a little lost Old Curiosity Shop that might have survived right out of Dickens, with a battered overhead sign and diamond pane windows and cobwebs all complete.

"Huh! Probably artificial." Jimmy had seen how spider webbing was made for American movies. "But good browsing, I expect."

That was just what the proprietor expected, too. He looked over the edge of his spectacles and invited crustily, "Just call me if you see anything as interests you." He went on picking at and polishing a trayful of the assorted rubbish that collects in a shop of that kind. A scuffling on a broad overhead shelf bothered him. He looked angrily through his eyebrows. "Blarsted nuisances! They don't usually get up there." But he did no more about it than go on with his work.

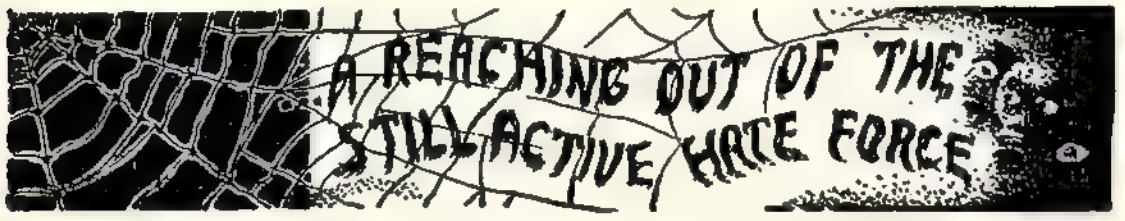
Jimmy presently brought a small jar to the counter. "What would you want for this majolica piece?"

The old man was irritable but honest. "Well now, sir, I wouldn't delude you on that there. 'S a matterafact I don't believe it is genuine. You see—" The scuffling and scrabbling overhead distracted him. "If I 'ad a 'undred bloomin' traps I couldn't keep the bloody pests down. I thought I 'ad 'em rid; but never 'eard 'em so bold as now." He was turning the jar over in his hands when forcefully shoved objects clinked overhead and a grizzly object fell with a dry plop onto the counter. Jimmy started back from it, grimacing sickly. The thing was a human hand! Old and dessicate, the fingers gruesomely half-hooked, as though in some last spasm. A thin tracery of spider webs spanned the contorted fingertips. A particular horror was a ring that rattled on the withered first joint of the index finger, held in place by the thicker bent joint. It might have been a signet or something set with two little red stones, almost like snake eyes.

As Jimmy recoiled, the proprietor poked at it gingerly himself. "Cawn't say as I like it myself, sir. A beastly sort of a piece, what?"

"What the hell is it?" Jimmy asked. "I mean, where—" The shop was mustily stuffy. Jimmy took off his overcoat and dropped it on the counter. "Where did you ever get a thing like that?"

"It's supposed to be the 'and of Saint Ury, sir; though I 'ave no idea 'oo 'e ever was. That 'ole through the middle is said to



be stigmata—what made 'im a saint, you know. Though if you awsk me," the man evinced all the disillusionment of an antiquarian "—I'd say somebody bloody well drove a nail through it."

Jimmy shuddered away. He left the jar there and went to examine things at the far end of the shop. But that horrid relic persisted in his vision. Almost as though some involuntary war activity of his own—shrapnel or something—had caused such a maiming that he had never known about but for which he might be indirectly to blame. He could imagine the broken thing, hating the world, and wanting to get back at him. He could find no pleasure in browsing.

"I think I'll be going," he said. "Some other time perhaps—"

The proprietor was stuffing his rubbish amongst the other clutter of his shelves. "It's orl right, sir. Glad to 'ave you look around, sir."

JIMMY took up his coat and went. He was barely round the corner when he heard footsteps pattering after him; and there was the proprietor, panting and furious.

"You give me back that there 'and, young man," he spluttered. "Or I'll 'ave to call the police."

Jimmy recoiled. "What d'you mean, the hand? D'you think I'd touch the filthy thing."

"You certainly did, young feller. I've seen the likes o' you before. There it was a'lyin' one minute, and the next thing you was gone and it, too. You with them big pockets." He dived at Jimmy and thrust his hands into the overcoat pockets—and there, out of one of them, he fished the horrid object.

Jimmy's stomach heaved. His mouth opened in protest; but he had to shut it again quickly to swallow his nausea.

"There we are!" The proprietor triumphed. "You bloody Yanks 'll swipe hanythink for a souvenir. Now just you pay me a pound, young man, and I'll say nothink about this."

"It's a racket!" Jimmy knew then. A damned panel joint game. Slip something into the chump's pocket and then yelp about shoplifting.

"One pound." The proprietor held out an open hand. "Or I ups and whistles for them."

So what could Jimmy do but pay? He was here on business; he couldn't waste time in a court over a shameful charge of shoplifting. He went to his hotel more disgruntled than ever about this whole silly business. He spent a night dreaming about dried hands that crawled like hairy spiders all over his bed.

OVER a fantastic breakfast of bloaters on toast and porridge he was discreetly paged—not piercingly shouted for by any brass-buttoned midget. A desk clerk bent over his table.

"A lady to see you, sir."

"A lady? I—I don't think I know any ladies in London."

"In response to an advertisement of yours, sir."

Jimmy went rather uncertainly to the lobby. In his mind had been an idea that it was professorial men who did this sort of thing. He was quite glad that he had been wrong. A delightful picture awaited him; a girl, neatly dressed in something that showed a figure, with alert eyes in a fresh round face and a cute turned-up nose and full lips.

"I came in a hurry to be the first," she smiled at him ingenuously. "Because, frankly, I need the job, and the competition for this sort of thing is ferocious."

"Oh?" said Jimmy. "Are you—I mean, d'you know how to go about all this unpleasant business of digging up dead relatives?"

"Certainly, Mr. Doak. I have a certificate from the College of Heraldry." She fished papers out of a bag. "We are trained in all the various avenues of research. You wish, I presume, to trace your ancestry. Somewhere back from British stock, is it?"

Jimmy felt silly again. "It's just my dad. This name, you know. Like in a comic book. Well, Dad doesn't believe any human being was ever deliberately named Doak.

He thinks there must be some mix-up somewhere along the line. He's heard so many wisecracks about it, it's got to be a complex."

"Surely. We understand about that. Thousands of corruptions have crept into names during the illiterate middle ages and they got to be written by somebody who couldn't spell the nearest way to how somebody pronounced them; and then the pronunciation grew to follow the spelling. We have old books and records about all those things."

"You do seem to know all about it. Then you'll take on the chore?"

The girl smiled confidently. "That's what I came for." And then diffidently, "Er, we usually work on a day and expense basis."

Jimmy was feeling more at ease since he knew there were other people who wished they could be called something else. "Oh, of course. You need a retaining fee or something."

The girl had two distinct dimples. "I could use it. And I shall go straight to the museum and have some information for you by tomorrow morning. You might, in the meantime, call up the paper and cancel your advertisement. Right? Cheerio."

JIMMY got a *Times* to look up the telephone number—and there the horrid story stared him in the face.

"American Accused of Shoplifting"

The rewrite man was able to see what seemed to Jimmy to be a far-fetched British humor in his shameful experience; and it was worse even than he knew. The story went on: "So badly did this queer fellow want the relic that he apparently returned that night and broke into the shop to get it. A mystery note, however, comes in, for the police report that only a single small pane of glass was broken; and the extraordinary part of it all was that the glass was pushed out from the *inside!* Almost as though the thing had loved him at first sight, and had jumped out to him of its own volition. Saintly hands, of course, have been known to accomplish miracles more astounding than that."

What a foul thought! That a thing like that should want to be friends! Jimmy had a creep all over to think of putting his hand into his pocket and finding the horny thing clasping his fingers. His next immediate reaction, naturally, was that he was a fugitive from lynx-eyed Scotland Yard. But the paper had given no description of him. He breathed easier, reflecting that the thing, after all, had no great value. It had remained, as its spider webs attested, on that top shelf for who knew how many years before it jumped down to— Jimmy, too, jumped from his chair with a hunted look. It had not been rats! If it had not jumped down of its own volition, how had the foul thing crawled into his pocket? Could it be really true that there were haunts in this old country of ancient traditions?

With a mad impulse Jimmy raced to his room to hunt through his coat pockets again. No. Thank God! Jimmy grinned sheepishly to himself. What a foolishness! But the beastly thing had made such a horrid impression on him. Why wouldn't it, getting into his pocket that way? Then Jimmy's eyes widened and he made a dash for his suitcase. Perhaps it— That damned reporter's loathesome suggestion that it had fallen in love with him—! He stood off to survey each tumbled article on the bed. His breath blew from him in a vast relief. He lit a comforting pipe and sat down to consider a reasonable theory for himself. The most reasonable one was that the proprietor, obviously a vile-tempered old crank, had flown into an insane rage and hurled the miserable thing through his own window pane. And then, repenting, he had gone out to retrieve the implement of his cunning racket, to find that some stray cat or something had run off with it, and he had been ashamed, then, to admit his silly rage.

"Bloody fool!" Jimmy expressed his quickly learned Anglicism. "And me too. This business of digging into dead men's pasts gets a guy morbid. But, phe-ew, what an experience!"

MORNING brought the girl, full of news and triumphant. "You never even asked my name," she blamed him and herself in the one breath. "And I was so

staggered with the amount of money you advanced that I just ran. I'm Eula Bogue." She dimpled. "It used to be Boggs—that's how I got into this research work. And I have lots of news. Let's sit down and look at it."

In businesslike manner she spread sheaves of notes over the little desk. "For just now let's never mind all the false starts. Let's look first at what seems to be a definite lead. It goes fascinatingly back. There seems to have been an old Anglo-Saxon name, Dork, or Dawk, or Dock, spelled half a dozen ways. Mostly north of England."

Jimmy whistled. "Whe-ee! As far back as that? Dad would sure be tickled. And it could be, I suppose, that it was twisted to Doak?"

"Oh, very possibly indeed. With the illiterate Puritan emigration from here, you know. And there's something even more exciting. Up in Cumberlandshire there's a little place called Dockbridge, apparently the family home town, and there's one of those fearfully old manor houses that's been built over and rebuilt and remodeled and its' full of rats and rattly windows and a mouldy library and a housekeeper and—it's vacant!" She finished all of that in one breath.

Jimmy was thrilling in response to her enthusiasm. "You mean, we could go there and dig in the library?"

"If," she said uncertainly, "you could—I mean, all you Americans are rich, aren't you—if you could afford to rent the place for a week or so."

"Gee!" said Jimmy. "A post-grad in ancient history! I'll cable Dad we've got a hot lead. So let's go."

DOCKBRIDGE manor house was not quite as Eula had described it. The more modern part was not full of rats and even had a bathroom. It was built on a knoll and apparently at one time there had been a moat, now a sunken garden of unkempt cannas and iris and weeds. There were crumbly walls and moss-grown mounds of masonry, some of which had been rock gardened and then left. Clearly, with the current austerity, it was too expensive to keep up and now stood hopefully for rent.

The housekeeper, a gaunt lady dressed in ghostly gray, had lived so long with the older conventions that she turned a sternly disapproving eye on so modern an intrusion as a young man and a girl.

"I'm Mrs. Medford," she introduced herself. "And I'm as good a chaperone as any. So, if the young gentleman will carry the bags, I'll show you to your rooms."

She showed them to rooms discreetly separated at the two ends of a musty right-angled corridor. She had quite clearly moved her own things into a room right at the corner.

"So that, if you need 'elp, Miss, I'll 'ear your call."

"Why, the idea!" Eula flamed scarlet all round to the back of her neck.

"Oh, I down't mean from 'im, Miss. Though I wouldn't put it past 'im. We saw all about them good-lookin' Yanks during their invasion. It's just that old Sir 'arry's ghost miauws around moonless nights; 'im that was Prince Charlie's Marster of 'Orse when the old manor stood, what's foundations this is on."

Eula laughed gaily. "All my frowzy browsing"—as though she'd spent twenty years at it—"and I've never had a ghost yet."

The housekeeper's disapproval sank several notches lower. "It's you moderns as ain't no reverence. But *I* sees 'em!"

Jimmy stared at her. He was developing a habit of staring at these sudden surprises. Mrs. Medford seemed to be accustomed to surprising people. She added to this one, "You, sir, will not be 'earing the miaulin's and prowlin's on your side. You're over the old chapel. So your windows 'as the bars."

Jimmy looked his question at Eula, as though she ought to know all the conventions of old manors. The housekeeper offered the logical answer.

"Because them as don't say prayers regular goes balmy and jumps. I'll serve dinner before dark, sir and ma'am. We don't dress nowadays." She went sternly about her affairs.

"Is it an act?" Jimmy all unconsciously whispered it.

Eula giggled. "I think the poor soul has gone a little balmy herself, living alone in this mouldy old place. The library ought to yield pure gold. We'll dig tomorrow."

EVEN tomorrow's sun couldn't make a cheerful breakfast, because the morning paper had another item by the same rewrite man who dealt in humor.

NORTH LONDON DRUNKS HAVE A NEW HEEBIE-JEEBIE

It's not pink elephants any more for a party of late home-stragglers from the Coach and Horn pub on the Lincoln Road. It's five-legged spider the size of a saucer that runs along the dark gutters with the speed of a greyhound.

Well, of course, there was nothing so much to that. But Jimmy stared at the paper with a reluctant horror. For the item went on:

Curious verification comes from two boys—models of rectitude, their parents insist—who say they saw it by dawn's gray light, scuttling along a country lane ten miles farther North in Middlesex. Only, to their juvenile imaginations, not so far removed from fairy lore—

This was the part that held Jimmy's eyes in their wide stare.

—it looked more like a hand running on its fingertips.

"What's the matter?" Eula was alarmed at Jimmy's pallor.

He pushed the paper to her, waited while she read the item, and to her answering stare said, "Did you see the one about the Yank shoplifting a dead hand, and then the broken window?" And, as she nodded, he silently pointed his finger to his own chest.

"You? Good heavens! But you didn't, of course."

"No, I wouldn't touch the filthy thing. But—you know more about these antique incubi. What does it all mean? Why *is* it following me north?"

Eula was, for the first time, serious. "Why do you say 'incubi'? As though this one were hung onto you. Of course, we do have a lot of spooky legends in an old country like this; some of them accepted as authentic by professors of psychic lore; such as the Glastonbury crypt and the Monster of Glamis Castle. But a dried hand—" She closed her eyes in tight thought. "Wait a minute. Let me think. What is it about, somewhere, a 'hand of glory'?— But no. That's just black magic."

"Just black magic." Jimmy repeated it. "That's all. So what is this? A pure white symbol of grace?"

Eula made herself laugh again. "Oh, it's all rubbish! Some drunks have a D.T. and some boys read about it and let their imaginations run. This is our usual summer hysteria—to fill up space in the paper when there's no crime. You'll see."

AND within a couple of days they did see. A *Times* reader correspondent, and amateur entomologist, wrote a solemn article decrying hysteria and offered his theory that a tarantula (a large Central-American spider, he injected his educational note) might very easily have been imported with a bunch of bananas and that, like all the arachnidae, was capable of running with a considerable speed that, to people under the influence of liquor—etc., etc.

"There! You see?" said Eula. "Now perhaps you can help me with some of this mouldy reading."

The reading proved to be exciting. The library, although a muddle of volumes saved up from, it seemed, the beginning of printing, but never indexed, contained ancient tomes of incunabula, and even manuscript.

"Priceless!" Eula mooned over the mess. "I mean, even in money. And to think that the owner never comes here, nor, I suppose, has ever opened a book."

The housekeeper stood at the door. She had an uncanny memory for having, once upon a time, dusted some volume and, if

any of the old family names had appeared, remembering them.

"'E don't come," she stated like a Hecuba, "because this 'ouse gives 'im the 'orrors."

"I think," said Jimmy, "some of these books all about battle and murder and sudden death would give me the horrors if I should read them all."

"That's out of the prayer book," Mrs. Medford accused him. "Which, if you doesn't say it reverent, the Lord says the blasphemers shall perish. And if you'd a but told me you was a'unting for old family names, I'd a told the young lady, pore thing, to look in that there book with the brown binding ate by roaches."

"Why poor thing?" Eula grimaced.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Medford.

Only that, "Aa-ah!" and she drifted grayly out.

But the book proved to be some of the gold mine Eula had expected.

"Look! Oh, looky! Here's 'Ye Hystorie of ye Familye of ye Noble Sieur Armand D'Auk wyth his Battailles and his Honneurs.'"

"They sure thought up long titles in those days," Jimmy obtusely said.

"Yes, but don't you see, Silly? There's your name! D'Auk!—Dork, Dock, Doak, and I suppose dozens of other spellings. Norman origin, not Anglo-Saxon. I expect we'll be finding your dad to be one of our oldest families."

"Golly!" said Jimmy. "Damn if I don't think it may be. Can you read that olde Englyshe stuff?"

"Of course. What the roaches haven't eaten. And—it seems there ought to be three more volumes of it. Perhaps Mrs. Medford knows where to find—we must get a ton of paper and you take the notes while I puzzle it all out."

THE excitement of this find was such that they didn't read the morning paper until the afternoon. And then both looked at each other, questioning what each thought. For a sober scientist had written his screed to the *Times*, attacking with all the virulence of scientists the "insufficiently informed" opinion of a layman who dared to shoot off his mouth.

A tarantula, he maintained, while capable of moving with considerable speed when attacking its food, was a creature as sedentary as a wolf spider or a common household daddy-long-legs; that all of them spent their life span within a circumscribed radius of perhaps no more than fifty feet; that the distance of ten miles was ridiculous to the point of impossibility; and that there this thing that the boys had seen in upper Middlesex, whatever else it might be, was certainly not a tarantula; and furthermore, a tarantula was not a nocturnal hunter nor could it withstand the night temperatures of the English countryside; and, if it could, it would be in a lethargic and dormant condition.

His thorough disposal of that matter left Jimmy's dark question:

"Then what was it? If not my—" his inadvertent slip brought a shiver. "If not that damned hand?"

Eula reassured him. "Oh, what does it matter what it was? A something. A scurrying rat, a rabbit, an anything. We've got much more exciting things here to speculate about. Look. This D'auks whole name was The Sieur Armand D'Auk D'Auberge and—" She suddenly clapped her hands. "Why, there it is! D'Auk D'Auberge—From which, following Grimm's law of colloquial sublimation, we get Dockbridge. This very village and the manor. Now for some of his 'battailles' and his 'honneurs', and there ought to be his 'offsprynges' somewhere."

THE research, while fascinating, was jarred to a standstill more than once by the morning paper that both of them avidly scanned for any follow-up on the tarantula that couldn't be a tarantula. The rewrite man was not laughing any more. He was calling it now, "The Spider Horror." There was the item about a lady, a stern and very well-balanced social worker, who was going home late from her church meeting and had been attacked by the Horror!

"I saw it in the moonlight," she related to her interviewer. "Scurrying along like a

—well, like something I, for one, had never seen before. So I struck at it with my umbrella and—now I cannot truthfully say that it snarled at me; but I could see its wicked little red eyes; and then it leaped at me! At least three or four feet, the distance must have been from my umbrella end. And it caught me by the ankle and threw me down; and then I suppose—no, I have never fainted. I should say not. But then I don't know what happened. When I came to—I mean, when I could see again, it was gone."

"Did you notice," Jimmy pointed out, "*where* that happened? In Leicestershire."

"Well, so what?"

"Still coming *north!* Following!"

Eula shrank away, envisioning a dead, mummified hand's relentless coming. "But, Jimmy, it *can't* be! She saw its red eyes, she said."

"The ring!"

Eula's hand covered her lips. "D'you really think the thing is after you for some weird reason? Like a voodoo or something?"

"How should I know? I don't know anything about voodoo."

"But, coming from America, isn't that sort of in your back yard? Your Negroes, you know; and Haiti. Don't they kill chickens with their teeth and project occult 'sendings'? Little dolls and snakes and things to go and carry curses and—?"

"Helluva idea you've got of America," Jimmy growled.

"Well, I've read it somewhere. And you're the one who insists it's following you. Jimmy, I'm afraid."

"*You're* afraid?"

"Yes, because—I mean, if it's as real as that; not just summer hysteria; and if it can jump at a strong-minded lady who hits it with an umbrella and can catch her by the leg and throw her down, it could—" She shivered close to him.

It was Jimmy's role to comfort her. "Well, at least it didn't bite her when her strong mind went out like a weak light. After all, what can it do, wandering about the country like a homeless ghost—" He wished immediately he had not said that. "What I mean, what gave me the willies was just looking at the beastly thing. Come on, let's lunch."

Mrs. Medford supplied a skimpy lunch. "Seein' as 'ow the hiceman didn't come, the cold chicken went bad, so I gave it to Lady Jane."

Lady Jane was her woolly poodle that yapped at flies and assiduously hunted cockroaches in baseboard corners. The skimpiness of the lunch didn't matter because Mrs. Medford banished all appetite, remarking out of nothing:

"It's a'comin' 'ome!"

Both Jimmy and Eula sat suddenly stiff in their chairs. Mrs. Medford answered their stares with, "I've read it in the paper, same's you 'ave." To which she added the shock. "And me bein' a seventh daughter, I *seen it!*"

"Good Lord!" Jimmy had until now been willing to accept Eula's comforting theory that he had received a gruesomely strong impression and was attaching it to similarly gruesome accounts in the newspaper. "What d'you mean, it's coming home and you've 'seen' it?"

"I don't know, sir, just what it means. All I can say is, I was a'setting with me old friend, Mrs. Shaughnessy, she being psychic (physic, she pronounced it) and all, a sudden I seen it in the dark before my mind's eye. A yuman 'and it was and it was nailed to a board! And Mrs. Shaughnessy she says, 'If you seen it, that means it must belong in your 'ouse, else why wouldn't I seen it too?' "

Jimmy, sanely unaccustomed to the jargons and hallucinations of psychics, flouted the phantasmagoria. "You've been reading the horror story in the paper and so you sat wishing for spooks and you dreamed the picture up in your imagination." And he repeated his self encouragement. "After all, what could a thing like that do?"

"Ah!" said Mrs. Medford. "Aa-ah!"

The paper showed what it could do.

"A Mister Bill Dibbs," it reported, "of Kirkby-Sheperd in Westmoreland, a gentleman who has had his difficulties with Lord Gravely's gamekeeper, was strolling home with two dogs and a gun—harmlessly en-

joying the moonlit night, he insists—when his dogs flushed the 'Spider Horror' out of a ditch. The thing raced, he reports, along the edge of the road with incredible speed. He just happened, he says, to have had a cartridge in his gun and he would have shot the whatever it was, but for the dogs that were too close after it. They chased it into a copse and there he heard all the frenzied barking and scuffling of what might have been a rabbit hunt. Until suddenly one of the dogs let out a piercing yelp and came cringing back to him in apparent terror, as though it might have found a bear, and the other dog was ominously silent. His gun ready for emergency, he entered the shadows of the copse to investigate, and there, to his consternation, found his dog dead. Strangled! Choked, Mr. Dibbs said, as though by some strong man. The gamekeeper reports having found nothing more menacing than rabbits in all the surrounding woods. The local police opinion is that it is funny that all these untoward happenings always occur at night and always to unreliable people."

Jimmy's only question to all this was, "Where's Westmoreland?"

"The shire just south of Cumberland where we are." Eula clung to his arm. "Jimmy, it can't be true, is it?"

"Comin' 'ome!" Jimmy quoted. "What do you in England do about getting a gun? And who is there who can tell us about the aims and motivations of this sort of thing? The whole works, I mean. All these stories add up to it can't be anything other than that brutal hand thing I saw in the store. The 'Hand of Saint Ury', he said; and not holy stigmata, but a nail hole. And our gray ghost woman threw her fit and saw it nailed to a board. So, very well, who can tell us what turned it loose. How? Why it's crawling home at night? Why pick on this place—on *me*—all the way up from London. If it gets here, what's it good for—or bad for? Who can tell us all about the rules and regulations of the haunt union?"

Eula frowned out of the window. "There's a whole lot of psychic investigators. I think the best would be possibly Dr. Eugene Harries. He's one of the W. T. Stead Foundation and a member of the Psychic Research Society. They go about shooting holes into the ghost stories that crop up every now and then and they publish a bulletin about their findings. What I don't like is that every now and then, too, they find some horrid thing that they can't laugh off."

"Let's invite him in and throw the whole thing into his lap," said Jimmy promptly. "So we can put in a little time on our own work on ye olde Brityshe Familyes. The deeper we dig into the tomes, the better Dad will be pleased. Heck, make us Doaks respectable old-timers, and I'll hold him up to pay for our honeymoon."

"Wha-a-at?" Eula sprang away from him and put the great old carved desk between them, her eyes wider than at any time over Mrs. Medford's revelations.

"Well, we Doakses have to be respectable; and it would be the only way to quell Mrs. Medford's disapproving eye."

"Good—heavens!" The shock was burning Eula all the way up to her hair, rising like a red flame. "You Americans are certainly sudden. Is that the way you always propose?"

"Sometimes they do it in an automobile or some such romantic spot; but I figure you Englishers, with all your haunts and such, would have to be different."

Eula was recovering some of her composure. "Here we almost never marry our boss. We have too much work to do."

"Work to do *together*," Jimmy said. "Come on and dig. We've been neglecting the gold mine."

IT TURNED out to be, as Jimmy awesomely said, a dynamite mine! Though, when they first found it, they were thrilled.

"Ooh, look! The Sieur D'Auk was 'Lord of ye High Justice and ye Middle and ye Low' and a 'ryghte valliante Carryer of ye Crosse'."

"Does that mean a preacher? Another Saint?"

"No, silly. A crusader. He went to slaughter paynims."

"That makes us Doakses a whole lot respectable."

"And here's your—this is jolly exciting—here's Saint Ury!"

"I don't see him."

"You're not looking at the book. He isn't in my hair. Here—Benoit De La Ceinture. Benoit of the Belt. He wasn't a saint at all. He was seneschal of ye keepe—that means post commander while ye doughtie crusader was away. And then, as understanding of Norman French died out, our old colloquial adaptation law turned Ceinture into Saint Ury."

FURTHER investigation made him very far from a saint, and the two investigators sat looking at each other with gray faces.

The doughty crusader had come back, as crusaders did in those pre-telegraphic days, without notice and he found, as other warriors have, that his ladye faire whom he left to languish through his long absence had been more friendly than was thought proper, even in those days, with the captain of the home guard. Having the rights of the High Justice and the Middle and the Low, he flew into a right noble rage and struck off the seneschal's offending right hand and spiked it to the great oaken door of the keep for all to see how the penalties of philandering were paid, naming at the same time the child—the second of his house—"a bastarde by fulle acknowledgemente and herebye sundered from alle inheritance."

Jimmy put his own right hand over Eula's cold one. "So that's the Hand of Saint Ury. And it's coming home!" He essayed a lame joke. "Perhaps that leaves us Doaks not so awfully respectable."

"Don't joke about it," Eula shuddered. "Your line could have come from the earlier child and you'd be a descendant of D'Auk."

Jimmy did not perceive the dire import of this until Doctor Eugene Harries arrived. The doctor elaborated his theories of the case with professional obscurity.

"Interesting. Most interesting! From what you tell me, we must indubitably ac-

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cept this scuttling creature of the dark as the hand of which you have traced the history. Quite clearly one of our more authentic cases."

"So all right," said Jimmy. "So it's a dead hand that was once nailed to the front door here, and it existed around somewhere and finally gathered cobwebs in an antique store. What I want to know is, what suddenly wakes it up? How? Why is it scuttling the night roads back to here? Who's it after?"

"Ah!" said the doctor, much as Mrs. Medford might. "These things are not very easy to explain. There is an old occult theory, now being almost reaccepted, that thoughts are *physical* forces; that a thought of hate can be a powerful enough force to persist after the death of its originator." He held up his hand. "A moment, please. I say the theory of thought force is being reaccepted in these modern days because you have the experiments of your own Dr. Rhine in America, who seems to have established that a concentrated thought can control so material a function as the roll of dice. In your big University of Ohio, isn't it?"

"Yes," Jimmy was closely following. "But that's a *live* thought."

"Ah!" the doctor said again. "But let us explore that liveness. A thought, an admittedly tangible force, has been created and projected into the, shall we say, surrounding ether? Where, then, is it, and for how long may it persist? To explain which very evanescent query let us consider the modern analogy of radio. A tangible impulse is projected. Where is it? It is everywhere. It can affect a properly tuned receiver at a great distance. It has been shown to circulate the earth with a certain perceptible time lapse and a diminished power that, however, can still affect a sufficiently delicately attuned receiver. Very well then; if once, we may logically assume the possibility of twice, or more, ad infinitum. Given, then, a sufficiently sensitive receiver, where, we may ask, is the point of extinction? The what you call *dead* hand is in this case the receiver, exactly attuned to the wave length of the powerfully projected thought of hate because it was a part of the original projector."

"SOUNDS hideously reasonable. But that's drawing it pretty thin, isn't it?"

"Admittedly so. But, the possibility accepted, the point is not one of tenuity but of capability to affect the receiver. In the case of radio, to make it talk; which means, first, to affect *physically* a receiving element and *make it move!* To revitalize it! To make it repeat the impulse that was originally projected!"

Jimmy and Eula were both hanging on the doctor's words with a growing unease. "You mean, this hate force could affect a damned thing like that hand and make it move? Well, then, why didn't it hit it long ago? I mean, any time after it whatever way got loose off the board where it couldn't run. What suddenly tuned it in now?"

The doctor beamed benignly upon his class of two. "We have considered, so far, the analogy of diminishing, though persisting, wave lengths or impulses. Let us now consider another ancient theory of magic that has been accepted by modern science—that of transmutation. We have derided the middle-age mystics for their belief in the transmutation of baser metals into gold. But our quite latest experiments have shown that the very atomic structure of so dead a substance as a metallic ore, when bombarded by certain electronic impulses, can be transmuted to another arrangement of its nuclei; that what we have called dead matter can be vitalized to become something so devastating as a bomb."

"That one," said Jimmy, "seems to be drifting far afield."

"By no means. The principle established, who, in these days, will be bold enough to set a limit upon material or transmuting agent? The analogy is that within *you*, the descendant of this Sieur D'Auk persist the genes that create a, let us no longer say, *psychic* force, but a tangible electronic—we used to call it, magnetic—emanation that bombards the dormant atomic structure of the too glibly called *dead* hand. Your presence, then, in the shop was what vitalized its implanted hate force and released it to

exhibit its present destructive manifestation."

"Hate! Hate! Hate!" It sobbed from Eula. "And I suppose you mean that this hateful thing is now scuttling along the gutters, coming home; and it somehow wickedly knows that the descendant of the man who cut it off is here and it will exact some horrible vengeance."

DR. HARRIES looked at Jimmy and very soberly nodded. Jimmy asked his question for the third time, and not with any doubting scorn.

"Just what can it do?"

"We have so far," the doctor weighed the possibilities with merciless impartiality, "discussed only the material sources of its potential; and we know from the reports that it can strangle a hunting hound. We must accept the probability, then, that it could also strangle a man. If we are willing to admit the psychic sources of power—as they are today being admitted in studies of the abnormal strength displayed by lunatics—we must face the possibility that it could be deadly dangerous, not only to the object of its vengeance, but to any interference that might stand in the way of its purpose."

To Eula's close shudder against him Jimmy grunted. "Hm-mm!" But his tight-mouthed expression showed that he was no longer taking this thing as lightly as he once had. "I suppose," he asked, not very hopefully, "it's no use trying to run away? If the cursed thing can run on its fingertips under its own power it could follow anywhere. What's chances of it running out of gas?"

"We have no means of knowing," the doctor said judicially. "Records of our Society show that destructive forces from the mysterious 'other side' have been known to persist for many hundreds of years."

"That would eventually wear me out," Jimmy said. "We may as well stay here and fight it. . . . How?"

"There remains," the doctor said hopefully, "yet another consideration. You have observed that it made no attempt to harm *you* that first day of your meeting. It has retaliated only against those who have molested it—the umbrella woman, the poacher's dog. It is just possible, then—if I may offer a slightly embarrassing surmise—that its smuggling of itself into your pocket and the subsequent following may have been induced by motives of affection."

"Good Lord!" Jimmy's eyes boggled. "What d'you mean, affection from a foul thing like that?"

"Well, it might just be, you know, that—er—your branch of the family descended from that illegitimate offspring and that the hand, or rather its original owner, was your ancestor."

"Godamighty!" Jimmy shuddered away from the thought. "And it wants to snuggle up? Crawl out of the dark and hold hands? Get into bed on cold nights and—"

Eula shrieked. Jimmy looked quickly at her, for the moment forgetful of the impending horror. Eula shrank away from so fearful a connection.

"In any event," the doctor said, "the possibilities of this whole manifestation are so intriguing—quite one of our most authentic cases, I'm sure—that, if you would invite me, I would, despite the many dangers, have to consider it my scientific duty to stay and offer such assistance as I may."

Eula caught at him, not to let him go. "Oh, please! We're so helpless and—frightened. We wouldn't know what ever to do." It was not occurring to her that she had no inescapable part in this hideous thing, that she could pack and go.

"Would you advise," Jimmy asked, "that we should be armed?"

"By all means, and immediately. We must accept the surmise that the thing *is* coming here, and a force like that, if not benevolent, could be devastating, since it is a 'walker of the night'. Er, this tall lady in gray whom I have seen hovering in the background, could she be relied upon in a situation of danger involving, we must be prepared to accept, certain aspects of supranormal horror?"

"She's one of the three Norns," Eula said. "She lives with all the horrors of this house. If she approves of you she will let you stay."

Mrs. Medford did approve of Dr. Harries as being one who could understand her "physic" manifestations. And Dr. Harries approved of her idea of sitting in seance with her friend Mrs. Shaughnessy. "There is always a possibility," he said, "that out of these visualizations impressed upon the subconscious by wandering thought forces —spirits, as the faithful call them—one may obtain useful information, as one does also occasionally from people under hypnosis."

THE seance turned out to be a distressful affair of meanings and shriekings and dire threats. Mrs. Shaughnessy first moaned and shook and went into her trance, out of which she announced that a "dark spirit" filled the room and wanted to "get through," but not through her; it wanted to "control" someone closer to the house. Whereupon Mrs. Medford went through the moans and shudders and sat finally in a rigid coma. Till a ventral voice croaked from her.

"I'm 'ere," it said. "Not 'ere, but in this 'ouse before it was 'ere. I'm a'lookin' out a winder onto the cabbage garden; which they ain't cabbages but mossy cobblestones. And there's people an' soldiers in harmor an' lords in velvet an'—" Suddenly she shrieked. "I see 'im! There 'e comes! Shoved along by soldiers in harmor and all a'draggin' of iron chains. I see 'im! A 'orrid great 'airy man!" She shook and groaned the anguishes of the hairy man.

"It was a horrid great hairy hand," Jimmy fitted into the picture.

Mrs. Medford shouted out of her temporary quiescence. "E lifts them 'ands in their chains an' rattles 'is fists. A'cursin' 'e is. Eatin' an' drinkin', 'e says. 'Wakin' an' sleepin', Livin' an' dyin', I'll be awaitin' you, Lord of the Auberge. An' the velvet lord laughs and says 'e, 'Let the judgment of the 'igh Justice be carried out'." And then suddenly she clutched at her wrist and writhed in fearful resistance and shrieked agony again; and then she slumped down in a quivering heap of moaning and muttering semi-consciousness.

Jimmy and Eula came out of the dark room shivering, Eula unconsciously chafing her own wrist. Dr. Harries was not so much impressed. "So many of these manifestations," he evaluated the experiment, "although the faithful insist that they are 'spirit-controlled', can be ascribed to demonstrations of the subconscious. Impressions formed in not too well balanced and sensitive minds out of reading or hearsay are portrayed with fearful reality. This phenomenon is, in fact, the explanation of visions of saints or Madonnas. Although," he was coldly judicious, "we cannot entirely dismiss the possibility that the sensitive medium, the receiving instrument, having been impressed by some wave length from an outside source. We have witnessed, then, either a visualization of subconscious impressions or—" his acceptance of the possibility was frightening "—a reaching out of the still active hate force. We can do nothing about it until the hand is here."

IT WAS Lady Jane who served notice that it had somewhere furtively arrived. Out of the dusk came the piercing ki-yies of a poodle frightened to the near death and the creature staggered, rather than ran, under a chair, there to continue its shuddering yelpings.

"So all right then," Jimmy said through tight teeth. "What can be done in the way of protection?" He did not say, in the way of offensive fight.

"Ah!" said Dr. Harries, this time signifying meditation. "If we but knew how to immunize you—that is to say, throw some sort of an impervious blanket about you, as is accomplished by lead in our analogy of radioactive force, we might shut off your emanations from continuing to vitalize the thing."

"Well," Jimmy's very impotence flared to anger, "I'm not doing it on purpose!"

"Of course not. Though that, too, may be an unconscious possibility; since we know that such activation can be consciously projected by such people as the so-called wizards of mediaeval history and by African witch doctors in our present. Protection is supposedly supplied by various 'magic circles' and 'holy pentagrams' and so on,

although I do not attach much faith in these myself. More credible is another one of the scouted mediaeval beliefs in the potency of cold iron against what they called witchcraft—which accounts for the spiking of the hand to the door with a nail, the spiking of suicides, supposedly dissatisfied and homeless spirits, through their middles, iron coffins, and so on. Which belief has persisted into our own times in the form of iron amulets, iron crosses, whether as medals or over grave stones. Unfortunately we cannot enclose you in an iron coffin; and in order to spike down the hand again we must first catch it."

"Like catching a cobra. How about," said Jimmy grimly, "the cold iron of a gun?"

"The possibility is acceptable. Since, if such a thing could be distintegrated—say, by a shotgun at close range—while the hate force would not necessarily be dissipated, its physical medium of offense would be shattered."

Jimmy drew a long breath of almost relief. But the doctor mercilessly continued. "We might then be rid of the whole business—unless the force might still persist in some telekinetic form that could move other objects so as to, for example, push a brick off a high wall." To Jimmy's hunted bafflement he offered the cold cheer, "The question of exactly why a brick, or even paint, falls upon the 'unlucky' person has never been sufficiently explored."

"Well, I'm going right into town," Jimmy said, "and buy a sawed-off shotgun."

"Or perhaps," Doctor Harries suggested with that chilly acceptance of the worst possible, "you might get two. And perhaps, although it is still daylight, I might accompany you as an escort."

THEY returned with an arsenal and, in addition, two gaunt boxer dogs. "If they catch it scuttling about the house gutters," Jimmy told Eula, "and between them tear it apart; or eat it; I guess it'll be considerably disintegrated."

Eula's face contorted over so sickening a thought. "I suppose they would at least keep it on the run. But that poacher's dogs—"

That first night after the thing's arrival was a bedlam of scurryings and furious barkings that yielded nothing. Stealthy noises sounded in the unkempt garden. The dogs yelped their excitement after whatever it might be and galloped their great feet hither and yon like mad dray horses. At each disturbance Jimmy and the doctor stood alertly at windows that overlooked the dark grounds. They could discern the shadowy forms of the great dogs racing through moon patches, but not a thing else.

"Of course," the doctor suggested. "It could still be rats."

"Oh, rats!" Eula expressed her English idiom of disbelief.

"Perhaps we'll at least find tracks in the morning," Jimmy hoped, "and then we'll at least be sure."

Such tracks as they found besides those of the dogs were indecipherable smudges.

"Did the thing," Dr. Harries asked, "when you saw it in the shop, have long

fingernails?" And he evaluated the situation so far. "We can at all events assume that the thing is nocturnal, as are nearly all of these darker forces. We may, therefore, feel safe during the day—or fairly so—if we do not venture into dark places. We know that it avoids overwhelming weight, as of two ferocious dogs; also that it is cunning enough to do so, and, as in the poacher's case, to segregate them and attack one at a time. And since it has remained furtive, has not shown itself, we must, I am sorry to say, resign ourselves to the ultimate fact that its purpose is definitely malignant and that it is intelligent enough to be deadly."

"If we could hunt it down by daylight then?" Jimmy expressed a hope. "We can't just go on, knowing that a hellish something in the shape of a great hairy hand is skulking somewhere about the grounds, waiting for darkness to jump out at somebody and tear his throat out."

"If we could but find it. Its grizzly advantage is that it is small enough to hide in any of a thousand holes in the ancient tumbled masonry, while the hate force that activates it is powerful enough to be murderous."

Mrs. Medford knew where to find it. "It's livin' in the root cellar!" she told them; and before they asked her, "I seen it!"

"With the 'physic' eye, I suppose," the doctor said. "But let's take our guns and go look."

THE root cellar was a dim vault of great stones behind a massive door, cool and mouldy. Holes where stones had fallen out dripped water. Bins along the walls contained potatoes and the gross turnips that country folk and cattle ate. The doctor with inadequate flashlight scrutiny surmised it to have been one of those sunless guard houses for prisoners in the old days of brutality and insanitation.

"Hell!" Jimmy swore. All this uncertainty and impending menace was wearing on his nerves. "There's a million hidie holes. If we could rig an extension light from the house perhaps—?"

"We would still not be able to explore all these holes. Who knows how deep they may burrow into the namks. We would need ferrets, as in a rabbit warren." And he could not refrain from adding his inevitable note of warning. "And we know it is vastly more dangerous than a rabbit."

A scuffling noise in a dim corner whirled both of them around. A choked squeak came from Jimmy's throat and spasmodically he blasted both barrels of his gun in that direction. The flash beam showed that he had very thoroughly disintegrated some onions and a rat.

"And we do know," the doctor mused as though studying a continuous theory, "that it immediately retaliates against aggression." His scientific approach, even in the face of danger, was excruciating. Acrid fumes of nitro powder drove them from the enclosed space.

"My God!" Jimmy coughed. "What a pessimist!"

"We cannot afford," the doctor rumbled, "to be optimistic about any force that operates in the darkness. It is not a mere Christian superstition that light and benevolence are compatible. All we can do is be desperately careful." Over the late meal he suggested, "I would advise, Miss Bogue, that you sleep in the same room with our so formidable housekeeper."

Eula fluttered her wide spread fingers at the prospect. "I'd be more afraid than—"

"And I," the doctor said, "will move in with Mr. Doak. I would also suggest contiguous rooms—in this old chapel wing with the barred windows."

So it came that the four of them foregathered that night to peer down at pandemonium all round the house. A crashing of bushes, a mad galloping of feet and yelping dogs, at times both together, furiously chasing a something; and then again in separate confusion, the one in a hysteria under something too high in a bush to reach, and the other equally convinced that it had something cornered in a drain. And then the watchers witnessed a horror in the moonlight.

One of the great dogs lurched out of

the shadows, coughing and choking, and staggered loose-legged across a strip of lawn. In the uncertain light it looked for a moment as though it held a limp something in its jaws and furiously shook it. But as its head writhed from side to side they could see that nothing was in its jaws; but that a something hung from its throat and was not at all limp!

JIMMY and the doctor snatched their guns and raced downstairs and out. But the dog had by that time staggered into the darkness of bush shadows. Calling brought no response. Not even from the other one!

"We had better not venture too far into the shadows," the doctor warned. "Nor leave the women alone."

At the door both stood for a moment shocked back on their heels.

"My God, we left it open!"

Within the house no worse was immediately apparent than that Mrs. Medford was shuddering back out of a swoon, Eula chafing her hands. Water profusely splashed from the old-fashion wash basin indicated the process of revivement.

"Gaw!" Mrs. Medford mumbled. "I seen it."

"Well, you've seen it before," Eula said crossly, "and you didn't go off like this and leave me all alone."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Medford. "But this time I seen it real. A 'orrible 'airy 'and it were."

"She could not," Doctor Harries said precisely, "have identified it in the uncertain light out from these upper windows. However, since the door was momentarily unguarded, we must sit up, and together, for the rest of the night."

Jimmy was furious with everything in the world; particularly with himself for his uncontrolled nerves that had permitted the door to stand wide. "Yeh," he rasped. "Sit up and tell ghost stories." His hand nervously caressed his throat.

Eula sent him a reproachful look. "He was only warning us."

"Perhaps," said the doctor, "I have not impressed the warning sufficiently, even upon myself. Or we would not have left open that door. We shall know more in the morning."

All that they knew in the morning was that both dogs were dead. Both heavy-jawed faces contorted and tongues hanging out thickly black.

"Ye-es." The doctor hissed it slowly. "Cunning enough to have run them to exhaustion, confused them and taken one at a time. We must, while daylight lasts, make a very thorough search of every room in this house."

"And since dogs are no good," Jimmy said, "I'll go into town and hire a night watchman. Arm him, by God, with a battery of flashlights and a machine-gun."

JIMMY returned late. "Had a helluva job to find anybody who'd take the chore on. Not at old Dockbridge Manor, they popped their eyes. Why not? Well, there were jaunts there. Not relatives, 'black things'; and there were dead men's bones under the house, they had a legend; and so every damned yokel was scared. . . . But I got a great lout finally. He'd been a guard in the Whitehaven prison, he says, and he'd watch a graveyard if he was paid. D'you find anything in the house?"

Dr. Harries shook his head. "We found only uncertainty; more nerve-racking than discovery. There are rat holes by the dozens in the dark corners of closets and cupboards. Holes large enough through broken plaster for cats to pass. I wish to heaven, since dogs are usless, we might hire a leopard or something that could adequately see in the dark."

It was almost a relief of the uncertainty that night to be awakened by Eula's screams from the next room. Rushing in, the two found her hysterical in Mrs. Medford's arms. Mrs. Medford darkly gave the answer.

"This time *she* seen it! I was a'sleepin' peaceful as a babe when I up and 'eard 'er a'screechin', 'There it is!', and I says, where?, and whatever she seen was so 'orrible, she went off like this."

Eula, shuddering back to normalcy, clung to Jimmy, her arms about his neck. "Take

me away!" she moaned. "Oh, take me away, Jimmy, from this fearful place."

All the comfort that Jimmy could give was, "I could let *you* go away. But it would be no use my running too. We know it can relentlessly follow. I've got to stick it out here. Isn't that right, Doctor?"

"I'm afraid so. Flight would be only a postponement, and here we at least know the conditions. This thing must be met and —since we don't know how to immunize its power source—it must be destroyed. *If* its power is destructible. Try to tell us, if you can, just what you saw."

Eula pointed shakily to the window. "Out there. I couldn't sleep, of course; and from the bed I could see the silhouette of that tree's branches outside the window. And then suddenly it was there! Its eyes! Its wicked little red eyes. Sitting on a branch and watching."

Puzzled, the doctor looked at Jimmy.

"The umbrella woman," Jimmy reminded him. "She said she saw eyes. Close, like a spider's, as everybody was calling it at that time. And it had a beastly ring, I think I told you, a black flat disk with two red stones."

"Hm-mm? I wonder? I just wonder now, could it be the dark mirror and the red eyes of Amubis?"

"What's the eyes of Amubis?"

"But no." The doctor shook that theory from himself. "That's an ancient Egyptian magic of terrible power. But that cannot apply here. This is black Norman hate—that history has shown to be powerful enough. . . . You, my dear, you must try to get some rest. We can't have a nervous breakdown on our hands at this precarious juncture. Leave your door open. We shall sit up on watch by turns."

"I suppose," Jimmy grumbled. "we can't really blame that fool of a watchman for not spotting something as elusive as a rat climbing up a tree. It couldn't have jumped that distance, could it?"

"Twenty feet or so? I would hardly think so. At any rate there is no tree opposite this window. Have you any preference for first trick?"

"I'll take it," Jimmy said. "I couldn't sleep under drugs. I'll light me a pipe and stay up. I suppose we must definitely take it by now that the thing is not, as you gruesomely sugggested, friendly. It's out for revenge."

"I'm afraid so. And I hardly like to tell you how much afraid. So—don't for a second let yourself nod. Wake me if you even hear anything."

JIMMY soon enough did. The doctor was one who had the faculty of being instantly completely awake. "What goes?"

"There's a scrabbling in the ivy outside the window." Jimmy whispered.

Doctor Harries' answer was loud. "I wish we *could* pretend it might be rats or a burglar. It's not *it* that's afraid. It sounds, in fact, to have gained the window sill. Lights! For God's sake, quick! Light!"

The old-fashioned bulb in the ceiling lit the room but not the outside. With the same impulse both men snatched up their guns and rushed to the window, directing their white flash beams through the glass. Whatever had scrabbled was rat quick enough to disappear. Jimmy threw up the window before the doctor, crying, "Good God! No!" could stop him. The bright glare showed nothing. Only a rustle of retreat scuttled though the ivy.

"Ha!" The doctor found a small satisfaction. "As I thought, it functions best in the dark. Light is a certain measure of defense."

"Look!" Jimmy whispered again, hoarsely. His flash beam was directed on the window sill.

There in the dust was an imprint! Of a hand! Of long, withered fingers and a palm—and the thin scratches of uncut nails!

From below came another flash into their eyes. The watchman's dim form bulked behind it. "Hanythink up?" he called.

"We don't know," the doctor said quickly before Jimmy might blurt out the shocking discovery and perhaps, despite the man's boast, frighten him entirely away. "We heard something in the ivy. If you do, don't wait, but shoot at the sound."

"Hi will that, sir. Though that there ivy is a 'ome for all the vermin, rats an'

sparrows an' what not, in the bloomin' county."

"So a watchman, then," Doctor Harries said, "is no better than dogs." He very firmly closed the window down.

"Why?" Jimmy could not break away from the awed whisper normal to a disturbed night. "Why didn't it break through the glass and in? It broke that shop window."

"I wonder." Dr. Harries stood with narrowed eyes. "Those were little *leaded* panes, weren't they? Could it be that it knew we were armed with weapons that could disintegrate it. Or could it be—could it just be on account of the bars of cold iron at the window? We know so little. Heavens, how little, about these darker forces. We know only that this one has a deadly potentiality."

"A dead man's hand!" Jimmy was muttering, his eyes staring out at nothing. "Supercharged with hate! Able to crawl! Able to run—to choke the life out of—"

"Here, here!" The doctor caught and shook him. "Snap out of that. Once let it crack your nerve and you're lost. Don't you see, that's just what it is hellishly trying to do? Like with the dogs; get them confused and hysterical. Come, get hold of yourself."

"*Phe-eew!*" Jimmy let go a long breath. He shook his head. "It's the damned beastliness of it all. The something from some evil portion of the outer dark. With all the advantage on its side."

"Not quite all," the doctor encouraged him. "We have the advantage of the light. Even flash beams. I don't know why. But it has always been that the darker forces function in the dark. Which, of course, is what makes them so frightful."

Jimmy shook himself to shed the shakiness of his nerves that had been creeping up on him. "You're damn right, Doc. We dassent let go. What about the watchman down there? Ought we not perhaps to give him an inkling, at least, of what sort of thing to watch for?"

"Or rather, to watch out for. If that thing should crawl up on him unexpectedly—"

"I'll tell him first thing in the morning," said Jimmy. "Before he goes home—and let's hope then that he'll come back."

JIMMY did not tell the watchman first thing in the morning. Because there was no watchman! A sick feeling of dread crept up the fine hairs of Jimmy's back as he explored the grounds, expecting to find a limp body with a blackened face huddled somewhere under a bush or in some dim corner of tumbled masonry. He found foot tracks. Not—he thanked God—hand tracks. Big flat-footed boot marks. The man had faithfuly patrolled. But he himself had completely disappeared.

"Well, the hell thing can't completely dematerialize a man," he reported in. "Or is that something else we don't know?"

The doctor shook his head. "No. I'm sure that our danger is entirely physical."

"Then I suppose he saw it and emigrated out of the country."

Mrs. Medford offered her, "Aa-ah!" And, "You go an' look in the root cellar!"

"Good heavens!" It came from all of them. "You haven't 'seen' any new horror?"

"No, sirs an' ma'am. I ain't 'ad no sights. But I knows the likes of them constable chaps. I'll bet 'e went root cellar a'lookin' for cold beer, as most folks 'ere keeps it there account o' hice bein' irregular. Else why did 'e 'ave to leave 'is fat job at the jail? You tell me that."

"Now be careful, Jimmy." Eula sent a worried look at him, starting up.

"Hold on a minute," said the doctor, "I want to look up an idea I have in one of these old records. It won't take long—you shouldn't go alone."

But Jimmy was too tense and impatient. "I'll carry my little old 'disintegrator'," he said grimly, "and flash light. I'm having an idea myself, and it's that the man may just possibly be needing help."

"Well, if you find anything, call," said the doctor, obviously torn between research and action.

Surely enough, Jimmy found the flat boot tracks leading to the cellar; and, as they came nearer, they seemed to have been walking on tip toe. The great door stood

open. Jimmy peered down the worn, slimy steps. He called. Listened hopefuly for drunken breathing. His only answer was the slow grinding creak of the door in a buffety wind. It reminded him of a radio program. He damned it and shoved an old cobblestone under its lower edge. Leaning thus close, he saw a muddy toe mark on the very sill, and, naturally enough, on the next step.

"The fool!" he growled and he stepped on gingerly down, careful against slipping on the smooth, worn old stone slabs. Not a thing was in the cellar. It was the same dimly dank place that he had seen the first time, sourly redolent, not of stale beer, but of stored vegetables. He did not this time hysterically fire at the soft scurry of rats behind the bins. He flashed his light under them and into the darker corners. Nothing.

Though yes. A door again surely. So green and moss-grown in its equally mossy wall that it could easily be missed. The flash beam would, in fact, not have picked it out at all were it not for a lighter line all along its lintel and jambs. Jimmy stepped closer. And sure enough, the scummy growth had been scratched away by some blunt implement, as though to release old in-grown debris and free the opening. And there, by the sill, lay the implement; a sliver of broken lattice from the arbor outside.

"I wonder now," Jimmy muttered out loud. "I wonder if he could have guessed it would be in there?"

A verdigris brass knob invited his hand. The door swung easily out towards him. Within was wet darkness. He stood uncertainly and flashed his beam about. The place contained bins again—or rather, stout oaken shelves; and on the shelves, stout oaken boxes. Long narrow boxes.

A vague intuition was pressing at the back of Jimmy's mind as to what sort of storage this might be. His nose was curling, uncertainly sniffing, when he saw that one of the boxes had had its lid shoved slightly askew, and the pale whitish gleam that thrust out of the slit to reflect his flash could be nothing other than a bone.

"The old crypt, by God!" Jimmy was, with normal impulse, backing away from it when his lowered flash beam picked out the body! It was huddled limply on the floor and was unmistakable.

The watchman!

THE rough homespun sleeve feebly moved. "Good Lord!" Jimmy rushed in and bent to lift the man. He was heavy. Jimmy yelled over his shoulder:

"Help here! I've found him!"

The boisterous wind must have carried his voice away. A gust of it swung the inner door shut with a slam, cutting off even the dimness from the outer one, leaving only Jimmy's flash beam in the pit blackness.

Jimmy damned. And with the hot breath of the word, chilled. Had that been a gust? He had felt no draught. He'd have to get the man out of there in a hurry. To be in a crypt at any time was a creepy enough happening. To find a blacked-out watchman there, whether drunk or wounded, was a shock to anybody's nerves. To have a charnel house's only source of light and ventilation slam shut on one was—Jimmy kept up his courage by furiously swearing.

His light on the stationary snap, he bent again awkwardly and in a frenzy of hurry to lift the man. His sawed-off shot gun in the crook of his arm, it was difficult to get a grip on so lumpy a thing as a man. And the man was— The realization came in like a blow over the heart. He was stiff!

How could his sleeve have moved then? Jimmy yelled again, futilely, for help.

And in that instant a something, violent and bone hard, dashed the flash from his hand! For a moment he could trace its spinning arc through the air and then it tinkled into the corner and was out!

Jimmy's breath ee-eeked out in a choked gasp. His stomach fell away, his blood, everything. Pit blackness and pit silence enveloped him. His knees limp, he sank down on the body he had been trying to lift. Even that relict of humanity was a comfort. Only persistence of vision seemed to function. He could see in the blackness a pale green arc of his last light.

And then another function, desperately needed, began to assert itself out of his paralysis. He could fearfully listen. He heard his pulse—like a persistent and useless little rubber hammer. So he wasn't dead of shock. He could still move. He *must* move.

He shoved himself off that dead thing on which he had fallen and hurled himself toward the door. A blow hit him in the face and rocked him dizzily back. He didn't normally curse it. He was prayerfully thankful for it. What had hit him was mouldily damp; it was the side of one of the old coffins. It oriented him, at least in direction.

He plunged to the door. It must be the door. His hands, desperately fumbling, could feel the wet panels, the straight crack of its jamb. He clawed frenziedly up and down the crack, inches on either side. Desperately back and forth and around.

And there was no knob on the inside!

Jimmy lolled limp against the door. He could feel his knees bend against it and his chest sliding slimily down the boards.

An awful sound stabbed at him with galvanizing force. A sound in itself commonplace and harmless. But here, terrifying. A stealthy scuffling.

It came from that grizzly box up there with the opened lid! Where that bone had been sticking out! The sound was a bony scratching of pointed nails!

Breath surged back to Jimmy, absurdly to *whoo-oosh!* And out of his jetty blackness he fired at the sound.

Pit silence again.

A thin hope of desperation trembled through Jimmy. Could it be possible that there was a merciful God in this hell pit and his blast had shattered the—had "disintegrated"—no other word fitted in—the whatever had made that sound up there? Jimmy's chilled consciousness refused to give it the name that it fearsomely knew.

AND then his whole being shrank together once more to hear the scrabbling of fingernails again. Not rats. Rats never sounded like that. Rats softly pattered. They harmlessly scuffled. They cheerfully squeaked. Rats were inoffensive warm creatures of human homes. They were—

The scrabbling noise plopped onto the sodden floor! Jimmy madly fired in that direction. Madly listened. He was shockingly conscious of the gun-blasted air. Conscious of infinitely worse than that. For that was his all! His last defense! Nobody with a sawed-off shotgun ever carried more than the two cartridges in the barrels. With a sawed-off shotgun it was never necessary—not against anything on earth. . . .

And then Jimmy shrieked. Every breath forced fearfully from him as a something scuttled up the outside of his pants leg, over his back, and rushed coldly savagely to tear at his throat!

Jimmy clawed furiously at it. Not his most remotely dragged-in hope could call for God's mercy. This was *it!* Dried flesh and loathly coarse-hair and overgrown nails! They tore at Jimmy with a savage hate.

Jimmy was able, with all the strength of his two hands, to loosen the thing's grip sufficiently so that he could at least suck in a breath to replenish the emptiness of his long-drawn shriek. The thing, quicker than any rat, let go of Jimmy's throat, twisted itself free, and out of the empty dark slammed itself against his neck. Slammed again at his face. It didn't seem to know about the modernly developed technique of a knockout blow to the jaw. It battered at any part of the head. Coming out of the blackness, Jimmy could see nothing toward. Every advantage was with the pent-up hate that could see in the dark. It could beat a man to a pulp at its vengeful will.

With arms and elbows, like an already beaten fighter, Jimmy tried to protect his face. Then the thing was at his throat again, as though it could tell that Jimmy was gasping from the fumes of his shots.

Jimmy's desperation gave him strength to tear the thing away. He could feel blood oozing. The thing, needing no rest, battered at his face again. It was not floating in air; it seemed to be getting its take-off from his shoulders, from his arms, even up from his chest, any place where it could momentarily settle and spring. At one time it missed

its blow. Its own vicious force carried it on to slap hollowly against a coffin. It plopped to the floor.

With mad hope Jimmy jumped, both feet together, thinking to step on it. But there it was, scuttering up his pants again, a devil thing of the dark, vicious with life, savagely bent on death. Jimmy's feet stumbled over that other dead thing on the floor. Its stiff limbs tripped him. He fell. Immediately he felt the scrabbling fingers run onto his chest. His frenzied snatch this time caught it. It was strong enough, crawling on its three loose fingers, to drag his both hands remorselessly up to his throat and to dig those fingers in. Jimmy dizzily thought he could hear voices and a pounding on the door.

Hope brought him strength again. He tore the thing loose. He knew that flesh ripped with its nails. It twisted itself free. Jimmy tried to roll away from it. That was worse. On the floor it could choose any vantage point from which to fling itself at him. Jimmy heaved himself up to his knees. The thing leaped at his throat again. The light flashes of beaten nerves were sparking within Jimmy's head.

BUT there the beast suddenly let go. Jimmy was able to suck in life-saving breaths and to flail wildly with his arms. If it were possible for the thing to be even temporarily disabled by so soft a thing as a human fist—

The light flashes had not been in his head. They were real. White beams of flash lights. The doctor was curbing Jimmy's wild blind swings. Lifting him, hampered by Eula who clung sobbing to him.

The doctor sharply slapped her.

"Snap out! Get hold of him! This place is poisonous with the fumes of all hell."

Jimmy was able to croak, "Look out! It's *it!* Here! It comes from everywhere!"

Eula made tight-bitten noises out of her hysteria. Together the two rushed Jimmy out. The doctor kicked the door behind him. Uselessly, for they had battered the panels in. They hurried Jimmy, slipping and clawing, up the slime-green steps to God's open air. The doctor slammed that door shut.

IT WAS Mrs. Medford who first had the courage to propose going back. After washing Jimmy off and bandaging his torn throat and after a stiff stimulant all round —that she stoutly refused—she offered her fearsome thought.

"It's 'ad its fight. It'll never be weaker than now. Lights, you say, is what scares it. If it's got to be destroyed, what I says is the time is now."

The doctor looked at the extraordinary woman. He slowly began to nod. Jimmy, his lips tightly set, nodded. Eula covered her eyes with her hands—and nodded.

They went then, with the one shotgun and a flash light each. The outer door had remained shut. In the root cellar nothing moved. The inner door stood broken as it had been left.

"You drag it open," the doctor told Jimmy. "I'll stand by with the gun."

Within the crypt nothing moved. The lights showed only the slime puddles where Jimmy had rolled. Those, and indented scratches of fingernails. From Jimmy's throat squeaked a memory and he turned his beam up to the coffin. The white bone that he had indistinctly seen before still protruded from the chink between box and lid.

Eula screamed. The doctor half leveled his gun and then he softly whistled. Mrs. Medford said "Aa-ah! I should ha' knowed it."

The white thing was the two bones of an arm—and they had no hand!

The doctor looked at the others, round-eyed. He pointed, thrusting with his finger. It was he who was whispering now.

"It's in there! Come home where it belongs!"

Silently, as though stalking a snake, he handed the gun to Jimmy. He made a rush to the coffin, shoved the arm bones in, and dragged the lid over to close the crack.

"Help me now," he shouted. "Help to hold it down! We don't know how strong it is."

"All together, swallowing down repug-

nance, they grappled with the box. "Light!" the doctor panted. "Out into the sunlight."

Inexpertly, getting in one another's way, desperately gripping down the lid, they pulley-hauled the coffin from its shelf. Shoved it sliding up the wet steps. Out into the warm summer sun.

There with an astounding courage the doctor sat his whole weight down on it. Beckoned Jimmy to add his weight. Beckoned Eula. She came, but would sit no closer to the oaken board than on Jimmy's lap.

Mrs. Medford said, "So now you've catched it. So now tell us 'ow a thing like that is kept catched."

THE doctor frowned away into the distances of his dark knowledge. "I—don't—know," he said. "For the present, in bright daylight, it will not burst out. I must think. My immediate thought is—nails. *Iron* nails. I expect Mrs. Medford must know where there are some. And the next thought is, what about the unfortunate watchman?"

"We can only guess," Jimmy said. "I'd guess he saw something and tiptoed after it; and then down there—" He shivered in the warm sun and put his fingers tenderly to his throat.

"Yes, I suppose so. We must get him out and notify the authorities."

Mrs. Medford came back with a hammer and nails. "Not that them'll 'old it down for long. Not come dark."

"No. We must think of something better."

Eula, nose wrinkling, watched with a determined vindictiveness the doctor's nailing of the lid. Suddenly she pointed to where his hands smudged off some gray mold.

"Look. It was he, sure enough."

Faint gothic letters showed. "B-n--t d- 1-Cein-ure."

"Yes," Doctor Harries said. "It would make a priceless piece for some museum. But the more I've been thinking, the more convinced am I that light—fire light—will destroy this malignant force. And why not now? And here!"

"God knows there's enough of old timbers lying about." Jimmy, without any argument or question, set about collecting. Eula helped with a determined enthusiasm.

"The only thing I like about this dreadful place," she said. "Is its stock of old firewood."

In the bright sunlight, then, they hoisted the gray-mouldy coffin onto the pyre. Eula vindictively lit it, and they stood back.

The dry timbers roared up and quickly made a red furnace in the middle of which the coffin gave off a vast black smoke before its sides began to crack and long lines of fire crept along the slits and ate into its moldy interior. Eula suddenly covered her eyes and screamed. With a grim satisfaction Jimmy watched a gray spidery horror break through the burning side, scrabble madly in the furnace and then fall back. In tight-lipped silence, his every nerve taut, he watched the gray fingers turn black and curl together and glow red and disintegrate in little licking blue fires.

"That," Doctor Harries said, "I think disposes of that."

Jimmy put his arm about Eula. "At all events," he said, "I think it proves that ours was the respectable branch of us Doaks. It took to my pocket in the first place for some sort of revenge. Fancy my going into the very shop it'd been in all these years.

"From now on, how shall *we* spell our name?"

Eula pushed away from him. "I'll have nothing to do with anything from the past. The plain American way is all we'll ever use," she said firmly.

"Oke—Doak," retorted Jimmy, at last able to get a grin out of the business. "But how are we going to convince Dad?"

The Sixth Gargoyle

BY DAVID EYNON

Heading by J. R. Eberle

. . . perched on the flying buttress were the fantastic stone figures.

THE tiny town of Veere sits snugly on the coast of Zeeland, huddled against the dunes which protect it from the harsh Nordzee winds. On the land side thick, serrated walls hide all but its rooftops and the tower of the Raddhuis which leans, ever so little, to the North, as if it had been bucking the gales for centuries.

A sea wall edging the harbor stands staunchly against the waves which come roaring in and, when halted by the huge gray stones, throw furious clouds of spray against the tiny houses that peep out over the quay. Stubby fishing smacks bob anxiously up and down and cluster together with squeals and groans, their nets blowing frantically from their masts.

The cathedral roosts on the hill, casting a benevolent eye over the village. It soars into the gray sky and sings minor liturgies to itself as the wind flies through its spires. Flying buttresses, crumbling with age, hang at its sides like town lace. In the cemetery sheltered under the south side of the cathedral are five graves, new, without headstones. Four of the graves are filled and show fresh mounds of earth. The fifth grave is waiting, open and expectant, for its occupant.

The fifth would be filled by morning, of that much Inspector Ter Horst was certain. Who it would be he could not say for sure, but the choice fell between two men—the murderer of the preceding four villagers, or the fifth of the murderer's victims. When the last gray light of evening dwindled and darkness and the north sea wind took possession of the village streets the choice would be made.

"It was a matter of practicality," said the gray haired Burgomeister, "to have five graves dug instead of only four." The old man leaned back in his carved chair and pulled throughtfully at his chin. The smoke from the bowl of his churchwarden pipe trailed upwards towards the ceiling and lost itself among the blackened beams of the ancient city hall. Jonkheer van Berendonk looked as quaint—and as timeworn—as a Rembrandt study. His silver chain of office, worn by ten generations of Burgomeisters of Veere, shone softly against the background of his black velvet cloak. Inspector Ter Horst waited patiently until the old man spoke again.

"It is true," the Burgomeister went on, "that we have only four dead at present. Still, if your theory is correct, by morning we will have five. It is cheaper, then, that all the graves be dug at once, and so did I arrange it."

"Yes," said Ter Horst, "Mynheer is right. By morning we will undoubtedly need another grave. What would I not give to know who it is that will lie in it!" Ter Horst spoke vehemently, irritated with his own failure to catch the murderer and apprehensive about the possibilities of a fifth crime. An idea crossed his mind and he spoke again to the Burgomeister.

"Pardon, Mynheer," he said, "but what if both the murderer and the victim both die this night? Then there will not be enough graves to go around."

"No," the Burgomeister admitted, "but in that case, the murderer would have to be buried elsewhere than the churchyard—is unhallowed ground—so it was still cheaper to arrange the matter of the graves as I have." The old man, pleased with his logic, smiled as he bent over to light the two candles on his desk. The clock in the city hall tower struck five and both men listened intently until the last sonorous note died out.

"Then, if the schedule is ahered to," said the Burgomeister refilling his pipe, "the architect should be murdered next?"

INSPECTOR TER HORST nodded. The schedule, he thought, would not be kept. It could not be kept. After all, wasn't he going to be at the architect's cottage, armed, on guard? And besides, he thought, it was impossible that any man could hope to complete a series of five murders, each a week apart, each but the first fully expected by the police.

Four killings perhaps. Certainly the killer

had had luck so far. But five murders, never. This time the criminal would fail and, in failing, become the occupant of the fifth grave. Inspector Ter Horst turned to the Burgomeister and, more to clear his own thoughts than to be enlightening, reviewed the details of the case.

"It is unthinkable," he said, "that this madman could strike once again."

"Imagine, Mynheer, even the shrewdest madman—for we certainly deal with a madman—being able to kill five persons in accordance with a set plan and still escape capture. Especially when his identity is known."

The Burgomeister raised his eyebrows. "You know who the man is?" he asked.

"In a sense, we do," said Ter Horst. "His name, of course, not. But we know he is mad—and that is something. Then, we know he is of a family that has been here since the cathedral was built. He is agile, enough so to baptize each of the succeeding stone figures with blood after he has destroyed their human counterparts. He is not, therefore, an old man."

The Burgomeister's wrinkled face arranged itself into a slight smile. He was amused at the way this policeman built up theories on nothing—houses of cards, he thought, that stood but a short time in the wind of reality.

Ter Horst continued talking, not noticing the old man's amusement. "A man of some education, I should say. Enough, at least to have made use of the records in the cathedral crypt. He must have traced records far enough to determine that each of his victims is a direct descendant of someone who helped construct the church. Our man knows Latin, at least."

The Inspector paused to light his cigar, which had gone out as he waved it about to illustrate his points. The Burgomeister got up for a moment to secure a shutter that had blown loose and was banging against the window frame.

"But this schedule," the Burgomeister asked, "on what is it based? How do you ascertain that the architect is next in his thoughts?"

"Ah," the Inspector chuckled. "A lucky accident, that. Pure chance that we noticed a spot of blood on the forehead of the first gargoyle. Just in searching the cathedral for a possible fugitive did we see it. Then, of course, certain facts fell into place and forced a conclusion.

"Imagine, six gargoyles straddling a flying buttress. Six little stone figures climbing toward the spires of the church. An artist, an engineer, a stonemason, a bricklayer and an architect."

The Inspector stopped and lighted a fresh cigar with one of the candles. He spoke between puffs.

"One by one each is murdered."

"Except the architect," the Burgomeister inserted.

"Except the architect," Ter Horst nodded. But each of the others has been murdered, and in the order of his position on the buttress. Each man a direct descendant of, and in the same profession as, his ancestor who is represented in stone by the gargoyles.

"Imagine the uniqueness of the motive behind such a crime—if madness can be called a motive."

The Burgomeister leaned forward in his chair. "How," he asked, "do you know that the sixth gargoyle is the criminal? Why not, for instance, the fifth gargoyle?" With this he smiled laconically at the short, fat Inspector.

TER HORST was not impressed by the idea. He deprecated it with a wave of his hand and, noticing that his cigar was out again, leaned towards the candles.

"It is," he said between puffs, "the sixth gargoyle because he is the only one who cannot be located. The first five are easily traceable. From the church records we know exactly who the first five men must be. And the subsequent deaths of the first five men must be. And the subsequent deaths of the first four hold exactly with our findings. Of the sixth gargoyle there is not a trace of information."

The Burgomeister settled back in his chair and mused to himself for several minutes. The crackling of the fire was almost drowned out by the wind's moan as it

writhed around the tower of the Raddhuis. The Burgomeister looked up sharply at Ter Horst.

"This sixth stone figure," he asked, "what does it represent? What sort of figure is it?"

Ter Horst gently stamped out his cigar butt on the tiles of the hearth. "The sixth gargoyle," he said quietly, "is the figure of a man committing suicide."

"So," said the Burgomeister. His tone showed a heightened interest. "Then we *are* perhaps dealing with a madman." The old man's huge dog lumbered up from the hearth. He stretched himself laboriously and then stalked over to be petted. The old man rubbed the dog's neck gently and the animal groaned in appreciation.

"And just what do you do now?" the Burgomesiter asked. "Is it necessary to wait until the architect is murdered to discover this madman's identity? Or do you wait until he kills himself, as he must, if your theory is correct."

"Two things I plan," Ter Horst said earnestly. "First, in the crypt below the cathedral, my men are pouring over the records to find any clue that remains which will point to our criminal."

"And if he has removed such records," smiled the Burgomeister, "when he made his own investigation?"

"Then," said Ter Horst, "there is a grave on the left side of the church, in unhallowed ground. Perhaps it may hold a clue, since it is, in all probability, the resting place of our original suicide."

"You would open the grave?" asked the Burgomeister. "There won't be much after four centuries."

"No," said Ter Horst, "but it is worth trying. If Mynheer would give his permission for such an act?"

The Burgomeister rubbed his leonine head, fingering the silver chain with his other hand. "I don't know," he said slowly. "It is an unusual request—and rather futile to search in any case, I fear. I would have to think it over. Besides, it is time for dinner," he said, noticing that his dog was nervously scratching at the door. "I will let you know in the morning."

"Of course, Mynheer," Ter Horst said, rising as the old man left the room and moved slowly down the stairs.

Ter Horst left the city hall and made his way over the slippery cobblestones to the architect's small cottage, just inside the city gates. The Inspector knocked and was admitted by the tall, thin architect who knew the stubby policeman from the past weeks of investigation.

THE host seated Ter Horst before the fire and took his coat. In a few minutes the policeman was nursing a glass of fiery Dutch "Geneva" and posting the architect on the latest developments of the case.

"As soon as we have the permission of the old Burgomeister," said Ter Horst, "we will open that grave. The Burgomeister is rather old-fashioned, you understand. He feels that it should be permitted only as a last resort, and we have to humor him."

"It is easy for old Berendonk to be conservative," the architect said with a smile, "where my life is concerned. Still, I don't think you would gain much in any case." He got up and went to a closet in the corner of the room. Opening the door, he drew out a raincoat and turned to Ter Horst.

"Since it is the night appointed for my demise," he said, "I feel guilty about wasting it in inactivity. Perhaps if we go to the cathedral I, as an architect, can help you in locating some information."

"If you're not nervous about going out," said Ter Horst.

"I will be less nervous if I am busy," said the architect.

On the slippery cobblestone road up the hill to the cathedral Ter Horst explained the circumstances of the crimes. He spoke loudly to be heard above the wind. Occasionally he had to repeat as he skipped along to keep up with the lanky architect.

"They were bludgeoned," he shouted as they reached the cathedral steps.

"What?"

"Bludgeoned, heads bashed in," Ter Horst said. They had stepped within the doors by now and his voice soared up into the roof of the darkened church. A policeman, on guard in the shadows, flashed his

light on them. Seeing Ter Horst, he saluted.

"We're going down to the crypts," Ter Horst said.

The officer nodded and stepped back into the shadows.

As the two men descended the stone steps to the underground section of the church their feet rang on the stairs. At the first doorway they were met by a young lieutenant.

"Ah, it's you, sir," he said, "I think we've got something."

Ter Horst introduced the architect. The young policeman showed obvious admiration for the man's nerve. "I can imagine you can make more sense from these documents than I can," the lieutenant said, handing the papers to the architect.

The architect took the sheaf of yellowed parchments and leafed through them slowly. At intervals he bent closer to scrutinize a poorly written phrase. Occasionally he muttered to himself. At the last page he chuckled and looked up at Ter Horst.

"You were indeed right, Inspector," the architect said. "Our madman has a unique motive indeed. It would appear that he, just as his victims, has followed the calling of his family—though how long this madness has lain dormant in his line no one knows."

"What do you find?" Ter Horst asked anxiously.

"This," said the architect, rustling the sheaf of parchment, "is the record of an unfortunate incident. It occurred during the construction of the cathedral, as you guessed.

"It seems that one of the casters—the men who made and installed the bells—went mad. Perhaps from the constant vibrations. In any case he jumped from the tower one day. Not necessarily a suicide, you understand—it could have been an accident. However the priest was doubtful. He called in the witnesses—an artist, an engineer, a stonemason, a bricklayer and an architect. On the basis of their testimony he decided that the man was a suicide. Of course, he could not then be buried in holy ground."

Ter Horst thought for a minute. "You mean, our murderer now takes revenge for an ancestor who was buried without grace? Five murders for a madman of the sixteenth century?"

"So it would appear," said the architect.

AND even as he handed the parchments back to the lieutenant a stone, dropped from the ceiling high above, fell directly on his head and crushed his skull. The lieutenant had taken the sheaf of papers from a dead hand and before he realized what had occurred the architect was slumped on the floor with a widening pool of blood around his head.

The two policemen instinctively jumped back and then, seeing that the architect was beyond aid, rushed up the long stairway to the floor level.

The ground floor of the church was empty. No one could have passed out the door. Ter Horst ordered it locked and then beckoned the lieutenant and his men to follow him up the stairway into the spire.

The exposed steps were mouldy with age and slippery with rain. The wind's strength made going difficult. As they approached the level where the still intact buttresses leaned against the church wall, Ter Horst stopped.

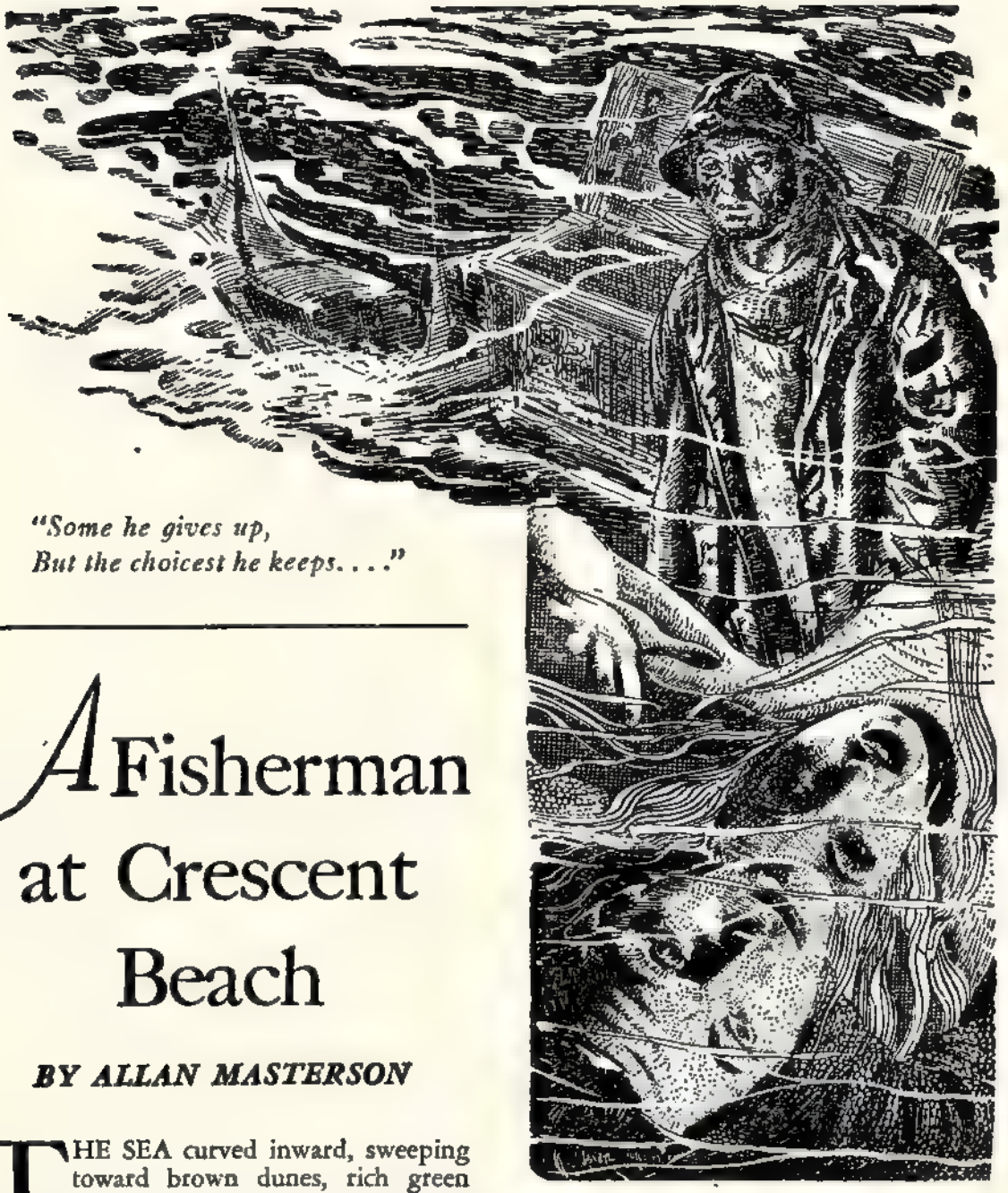
Across the stairway was a rod about six feet long. At one end it had a knob. On the other was a bunch of feathers. The feathers were stiff and dark with dried blood.

"So," thought Ter Horst, "we are not dealing with such an agile man after all. He has baptized the gargoyles with a tipstaff's rod."

He handed the rod to an officer at his side and walked over to the edge where he could see the six figures on the buttress. The moon went behind the clouds at intervals. As he leaned over the edge it appeared again. In the pale light he looked down the row of figures to the sixth gargoyle. Standing on the buttress was a huge dark figure that looked like an oversized bat with its wings flung out.

As the moonlight came to full strength

(*Concluded on page* 94)



"Some he gives up,
But the choicest he keeps. . . ."

A Fisherman at Crescent Beach

BY ALLAN MASTERSON

THE SEA curved inward, sweeping toward brown dunes, rich green marsh grass and the land beyond. Out the other direction, water and sky came ultimately together; between here to there was the occasional sparkling white of sail, the trim mahogany box-shape of a single motor boat, and further, the rust brown of a plodding freighter.

The day and the scene copied the brightest postcard; but it was a Tuesday—the water was mostly alone with itself, playing with a stick, throwing seaweed idly up on shore as though biding time for the boat-crowded weekend to come.

As the rowboat, its outboard putt-putting it forward, came out from the bay mouth and moved into more open water, it was drawn as though magnetically to a fellow floating thing.

Heading by Vincent Napoli

A cabin cruiser lay just off the beach, Crescent Beach—probably for the way it scooped itself out of the end portion of the Point. There were people diving from the craft. In the quietness of this bright, empty day their cries, their splashes, echoed clearly across the blue surface.

The whole scene was perfect, George Thornhill thought. The painted water underneath an artist's sky, the picture-book boat with its painted people, posing perfectly before they shattered the illusion with the motion and noise of swimming.

It made him put the outboard at trolling speed, its knobby nose still pointed true. He reached for his camera where it lay under some water-proofing (A photographer would rather be without his pants than his camera; wasn't it true).

He adjusted lens and speed, consulted his range-finder and other paraphernalia. Then he cut the putt-putt off and the little boat drifted; he rested his elbows on a cross seat, marveling again at the brightness of water and sky and the casual, candid human scene of young people—they were young, he could see now—before him swimming and frolicking.

It was then that Thornhill became aware of something else. He became aware of it because it disrupted the composition of his picture. Another boat. It lay shoreward of the young people and their cruiser; it was small, dark-sided, blending into the darker mass of the background shore. Nothing more than an antiquated launch he saw. Its lone occupant hunched over, fishing.

Thornhill frowned. It somehow spoiled the picture. By itself, fine. But the cruiser, looming its high old-fashioned bulk above him as he drifted closer, was another shot. He liked his pictures the way he liked them.

He put his camera down carefully and fussed the motor into life again. Annoyance, he told himself, was out of place on a day as lovely as this. But it was there. Now he would have to jockey to a new position, for he *wanted* that shot, the cruiser against the shore—nothing else.

Don't get so damn intense about it! This is a holiday, time off . . . remember? It was true. The whole thing, the stiffly priced, creaky beach cottage rented for a month, the promise that he'd lay off. And here he was getting as annoyed as if he were doing this on one of his usual assignments for the big weeklies. Trouble was, he should have gone to the mountains. You know what they say about not listening to your best friends. Thornhill was *that way* about seascapes. He'd photographed the sea from Silver Bank Passage and Fox Channel to Formosa Strait and the Sea of Azov. Some men collect stamps or hunt big game; Thornhill's hobby was photographing the sea.

HE CIRCLED the pleasure boat. The four young people aboard were in bathing suits—two boys and two girls, having fun with that indefatigable energy of the young. They smiled and waved to him with the friendliness of people in boats to one another. Thornhill chugged slowly beyond them toward the fisherman. The man was intent on what he was doing. His boat was a low-slung launch, its long, low hull dark with age. Sternwards, an ungainly housing stood up, ugly and old-fashioned like the rest of the thing.

The occupant was swathed in the clothes of a person, certainly, who knew the water. A black, broad-brimmed slouch hat, a jacket of dark material, only the hands on the heavy pole held unmovingly over the water's side showed flesh. The rest of the man was covered against the sun which then, before noon, was already warm.

It was a strange contrast with the young people. They, the girls in their scant bathing suits and the boys in their brief trunks, courted the rays of the sun. The fisherman, on the other hand, wise to the ways of sun and salt water, covered himself up. To the vacationer the sun is something to be sought out; to the native of the water, something to be avoided.

Thornhill turned his outboard-powered rowboat around in a great circle, careful not to come too close to the fisherman, for that was courtesy of the water.

As he swung around the bow of the other vessel, he looked over curiously. The hat and other garments so completely covered the man that it was hard to see that he was

a creature of flesh, except for the big, gnarled hands that gripped the pole. The fisherman seemed intent only on that. For a moment in his circuitous course, though, Thornhill saw the other's face. It was a thing of leather, seamy as he had known it would be. It was a face that had been scalded by the sea-sun, lined by flying spray, roughened by the salt and ruddied by the wind's fury. George had a fleeting thought that he had seen this fisherman and his drab, ancient boat before, but that was impossible for his vacation month had just commenced and he'd not been out until today.

He felt rather than saw eyes follow him for a short radius of the boat's arc. Then a gull cried above and there was a happy whoop from the pleasure boat and Thornhill looked away.

George got some casual shots of the sea and shore. He found himself then, drifting near the cabin boat. The happy young people were still diving and fooling in the water.

"Mind if I take some pictures?" he called on sudden impulse. They stopped their fun, looked at him for a minute. One of the girls giggled self-consciously and the two boys mugged and burlesqued mightily.

"Send some to us?" they asked. Thornhill agreed smilingly and fussed with his camera.

The giggling girl called to him, "Junie takes a wonderful picture, Mister. Just like a movie star!" With that, she pushed her companion forward over protests.

Junie, the girl so accused, was striking in face and figure, Thornhill noted. But when she smiled at him, he saw there was no conceit in it and he liked that. Junie dove gracefully into the water then, her young man, a big broad-shouldered, nice-looking fellow, plunging after her.

"I'll get pictures of you all," Thornhill promised. He waited until they had forgotten him and were once again going about the vigorous business of having a good time. All four were nice-looking youngsters, George noted, just out of their teens at most. He found himself focusing more often on the girl they'd called Junie. Youth by itself is attractive, but she had a natural grace that was noticeable. Her tanned, youthful body was perfectly proportioned: Thornhill had seen many girls in the professional photographic world with much less natural beauty than Junie.

Finally his rolls of film were done. Settling himself down comfortably, though they frolicked on, he looked dreamily on across the blue water, lost completely in its romantic expanse. His little rowboat rode evenly at anchor, and the quiet weekday time went by with the moving sun in the sky as clock.

ONCE they called across to him asking about the pictures. He told them how he could be reached; he said his name, wondering mildly if they would recognize it, or were they too young still, too full as are the young with their exuberance and self-concern to know much of the outside world or that part of it in which he had made a considerable name.

A shimmering heat haze grew out of the water, shrouding distances, lending a new intimacy to the scene. By the light, Thornhill knew it must be early afternoon. After thinking about it for some lazy minutes, he hoisted himself up and tugged at the anchor line. There were other places to go before this precious day was gone, one day from his precious month. The anchor was reluctant; George pulled for some time and from different angles. He thought for an annoyed moment that he'd be unable to raise it from where it had snagged on something, and as the boat and equipment, like his beach cottage, was rented for the month, it would be vexatious to show up ashore minus the anchor. How like a vacationer! But he was finally able to jerk the thing loose, and it came away caked with mud and other underwater debris.

A plane buzzed above as he secured the line, careful not to wet his camera equipment. With the slight motion of the tide, he had drifted nearer the fisherman and he struggled to start the motor, lest he come too close and incur the angler's wrath for scaring away his livelihood.

Once, and not long before, the dark-shrouded angler had turned and looked long at the pleasure cruiser. Thornhill and the silent fisherman were on either side of the cabin boat then but in a direct line. As George had lolled in the gunwales after his picture-taking, he had watched. It was the first time the angler had given any indication he was aware of anyone but himself. And from the direction of the slouch-hatted head, its angle, and the way it abruptly swiveled away after she dove, George knew the boatman had been watching Junie as she poised prettily at the bow before jack-knifing off. It amused him to think that even this dour-looking native had finally been impressed by the common denominator of a young girl's beauty.

Now the outboard finally fired, but he was closer than he would have liked to come to the fisherman. George looked over, ready with a word of apology, but the boatman was hunched characteristically, his heavy pole held rigidly. The drab dirtiness of the boat was more noticeable here, the vessel looking as though it had been raised from a previous sinking. The funny, high cabin in back made the whole effect one of topheaviness; Thornhill noted a huge, rusty padlock hanging from the staples and wondered curiously what such a person could possess worthy of locking up.

He circled the pleasure boat, and the young people lined the rail, taking time from their incessant skylarking to wave. Someone had broken out sandwiches and they were eating; the broad-shouldered boy gestured at him, then the food in invitation and George, smiling, shook his head. They called about the pictures and Thornhill nodded. It was then that the cranky outboard, throttled too low probably, coughed and died to the laughs and jeers of the young people.

He bent over sheepishly to work the motor into life again, and the four on the cruiser decided to swim over to him. The girl, Junie, was the last to dive in. She had been high up on the superstructure, on the cabin top. Thornhill admiringly watched her lithe body knife gracefully into the water, and then he had turned back to the recalcitrant outboard. Soon wet hands gripped his gunwales.

"Hi!" he yelled out in mock anger. "Don't soak my camera and stuff!" The hands popped away, but the giggling and advice kept up as the swimmers circled his motorless outboard.

Thornhill, his face red from pulling the starter cord and with unpleasant premonitions of rowing the long way home, finally got the motor going again to accompanying cheers.

Then the big boy, his hair plastered to his head in a wet bang, looked around suddenly and said, "Where's Junie?"

The other girl chided him mercilessly. "Oh, Ralphie, can't you be without her for a *second?* Honestly!" The other boy sank to rise again, spraying water. "Look, I'm a seal!" he whooped.

But big Ralph was back-pedaling in the water, looking around.

"Junie," he called.

Thornhill put his now-running motor into neutral, rose up on his knees and counted heads. Three.

". . . oh, you stupe, Ralphie! She's aboard, probably went below for something . . . didn't want to swim anymore. . . . *Honestly!*"

. George looked again, said suddenly now, "No, I saw her dive off; she was behind the rest of you. But I saw her dive. Right off the cabin top."

The girl stopped chattering then, and the three swimmers looked at one another.

"Aww," the other boy said. "She's hiding on the other side of the *Scimitar,* I'll bet."

Ralph, his face more serious than the others, filled his big chest and bellowed.

"JUN-NIE!" Then he was swimming away as fast as he could.

By then, Thornhill was underway, the putt of his outboard reaching a racketty crescendo. He beat Ralph to the other side of the cabin boat by some seconds. There was nothing, just the quiet water lapping at the white and red painted waterline. He looked in every direction. Nothing. There was open water on all sides but one—where the beach sloped down, and that was

too far away. Besides, it was empty. Only the fisherman, hunched and silent, unmoving. Not looking, unnoticing.

Ralph let out a yell. He had come with his powerful strokes, churning around the prow of the *Scimitar*. "Hey," he yelled. "Where *is* she? JUN-NIE!"

The other girl and boy had, by now, made the ladder on the pleasure craft and they were running about the vessel, searching, calling.

They stayed like that for a moment—it seemed like an eternity—while for seconds Thornhill and Ralph looked at one another, and the other two on the *Scimitar* hung on the rail with every now and then a look around the smooth expanse of water, unbroken, unruffled.

It was no game now, and even the silly girl had put aside her grin. The big boy in the water, urgency and fear in his voice now, churned back towards the cabin cruiser, as though he would see for himself.

"JUN-N-N-NIE!" The call echoed from the empty sea, only a circling seagull answered. George thundered his motor up to full and zipped to the side of the *Scimitar*. Even before he had tied up, Ralph was diving into the water, going down into the depths as though never to come up, and then when it seemed he too had disappeared in the lagoon, he would rear up, puffing and gasping, to gain air for another dive.

GEORGE and the other boy also dove, but neither was a good swimmer. Thornhill went down six or seven times, and the underwater dimension seemed immense. The minutes passed, more rapidly for all the activity. George was afraid for Ralph; a man could keep diving, forcing himself down just so long. Finally the boy lay exhausted on the deck, his big chest heaving, his head hanging forward. Even then, the others almost had to use physical force to keep him from dragging himself into the water again and again.

Ralph was almost out of his head; the other girl, tears in her own eyes, tried to quiet him. Thornhill resolved the situation by offering to go ashore to the Point and get help. He thundered off in the outboard. Again he noticed—and resented—the fisherman still sitting silently and immovable through this tragedy. The man could not have failed to hear the excitement, see their desperate efforts. But he made no sign, no offer to help. George suddenly hated the indifferent, black-clothed figure as he sped by on his way shoreward.

There was more wind now. The water was blowing up, and with the rowboat going full speed, George automatically slipped the carrying strap of his camera around his neck for safe keeping. The camera was an expensive one; he didn't want it to suffer a soaking as the boat lurched over the heightening water.

Thornhill made shore, beached the boat and ran as fast as he could. He finally found a house and a phone. He was back in the boat, heading well away from land before he missed his precious camera. It had, despite all precautions, slipped from his neck; probably back somewhere on the

beach when he had been running. But there was not time for that. He kept resolutely ahead until he tied up again at the *Scimitar*.

Ralph was diving again with the other boy helping as well as he could. They looked at him as he came aboard as though he could have some word from the shore that might change this dreadful thing that was growing in their minds and hearts.

Thornhill dove himself again a few times, this time weighted with a spare anchor off the *Scimitar*. Enabled to go deeper, George touched and saw the uneven, treacherous bottom through stinging eyes. Finally he came up and joined the others. Nobody said that it was nearly an hour since Junie had dove from the cabin top.

The County boat came from the Bay at last. The three-man crew listened silently to the details. It is hard for terrified people, telling of such a thing, to realize that it has happened, and happens again and again. The County boat and its laconic hands moved away and started to move in eccentric circles, ominously dragging a line.

"There's nothing any of you can do here, really." Thornhill, as the older man, was in charge now. The others were very quiet. George was worried about Ralph. All of them were deeply affected but the boy was, he thought, in a state bordering on extreme shock.

The cruiser came from a town further down the coast. Thornhill took the other boy aside and told him, insisting . . . there *was* nothing more to be done.

The *Scimitar* got under way at last. By then the sun was as though following pretty Junie into the sea. Thornhill felt comradely with these friends of the day; they were joined in the bond of what had happened. They said good-byes sadly; he assured them he would stay here for a while. He told them where he could be reached, after all, he said, knowing it was a lie, it *may be* she swam ashore . . . you can't tell for sure.

GLOOM crept across the water from the last gold of the sinking sun, the hills and promontories cast their fingered shadows across the deepening blue. The County boat, its crew matter of fact, kept trolling around in widening circles. Finally they said there was no more use now and departed.

Thornhill waited a bit until even the gulls had left the sky and there was nothing else. Nothing but the solitary figure of the boatman, still fishing. A dark figure as though carved from wood, distasteful to Thornhill for its indifference to the nearby tragedy.

After a while the photographer headed for home, in him a sense of deep depression growing with the gathering gloom. And there was something else. A nagging thought that was not quite identifiable yet.

That night he was going over some of his pictures. It was relaxation for Thornhill, forgetfulness when he wanted to forget because he could still see her sunny smile, her youthful, so-alive body. Abruptly he remembered again his lost camera. It was then he knew how deeply the day's events had affected him for he was not one to easily overlook the loss of a several-hundred-dollar piece of equipment.

A few moments later he was in his coupe heading out to the Point. It was a dark overcast night, but he had a flashlight. Thornhill was certain he had not lost the camera overboard; it must have dropped somewhere on the beach when he ran for a phone.

It was lonely here. The houses were few, dark now, it seemed. Only the blinker at the Point was alive. George found the beach and began to work his way down towards the waterline. The tide had fled away into the darkness, exposing below the sand dunes mud flats, and eel grass rustling gently with the offshore winds. The tiny lapping of water at the shoreline was the only other sound here under the night. From landward a cricket made a small noise but the reassuring sound was lost in his own thoughts.

Out there beyond the veil of blackness where the deep water lay young people had come for a day of fun, and it had become a day of death. This black, so black mark, on the calendar waiting for all of them . . . these things had always made Thornhill

wonder. He had followed the last war with his camera, and these imponderables had always sobered him and made him wonder where others just shrugged and said, "Ah, what the hell . . . you never know."

No, it was true, you never do know. Junie, so young, so alive, so bursting with the good years left to live; Junie diving and swimming. And now she was out there, out there somewhere, so near to life, so near to all of them in time still, but going, going so fast in the opposite direction to where no man can follow.

It was maudlin sentimentality, he knew, but that was not all wrong. This same sentimentality sometimes was called imagination. Certainly it had helped him in many ways with his work, with the composition of his pictures; critics said so often, "Thornhill, as usual, shows a depth of perception. . . ."

George stopped. Stopped his walking and his thinking on this. His light, sweeping back and forth across the beach, had come upon something. Not his camera.

It was the fisherman's boat. It lay mostly in the water, only its nose precariously holding to land. Empty. George Thornhill came closer. Where was the fisherman? He cast his light around almost apprehensively as if the grim, dark-shrouded figure might loom up suddenly near him. But there was no one as far as his light could reach. Yet this was not a likely berth for the night. The tide came and went with considerable vigor along this coast. It was now low, and flood water would carry the vessel away.

HIS resentment towards the imperturbable fisherman joined hands with a new thought. His unreasoning dislike of the man lent credence. But he *hadn't* seen his camera anywhere on the beach; this man had landed since Thornton had been on the beach. He *could* have found and appropriated the instrument.

George looked into the boat. Dirty, smelling of the sea, of fish and seaweed and mud. The boat bottom was a hodge-podge of rope and shells, sand and pieces of fish, rusty hooks and other odds and ends. He couldn't *see* his camera but still . . .

Thornton stepped resolutely into the boat for a better look. Excuses formed in his head. He would say:

"Well, I remembered you from this afternoon" (an accusing note), "and I thought maybe you came upon it, no way of knowing whose it was, but it's mine, I can prove it easily enough. . . ."

Justification. It took him into the boat poke. There was a lot to look at and, bent over, he did. Junk; rusted things of the sea, the nippers of crabs, a part of a lobster, and the smell that made him turn his nose up in disgust. He moved the length of the boat looking, and it was the rocking that brought him upright finally. George cursed. He was adrift. His weight had touched it loose.

The flashlight showed ever-widening yards between the shore and the old boat, being gently pushed from land by the offshore breeze. His predicament struck him. What would he say—and he hadn't even found his camera. He looked quickly around. There were some oars lying along the bottom. But no oarlocks. The boat slid sideways and seemed to drift away faster as the wind caught it broadside.

Flashlight still on, resting on the deck, he tried paddling with one oar, canoe-style but the heaviness of the old boat and the steady offshore wind made this ineffective. He looked sternward toward the high locker. Certainly the fisherman would have oarlocks aboard somewhere; usually these natives have several pairs, knowing how easily one can be lost.

Thornton considered the possibilities. He could call, but in this stygian darkness, at this hour, who would be abroad but the fisherman himself, and George entertained hopes of being able to get the old boat back to its original resting place before its loss was discovered. Flashing with his hand torch would avail nothing; a pinprick in all that great night darkness with no one to see.

No, he would have to work this out by himself. George worked his way back toward the cabin locker in back. There was a huge padlock in place at the door, and his flashlight picked up other locks on the floor, all old, huge and rusty. He tried the

one on the locker with his hands. He could not budge it.

Thornhill reached for one of the heavy oars, using its round, thick end as a hammer. To do so, he placed his flashlight again on the boat bottom. The roll of the boat caused the switch to go off, but he worked in the dark, feeling the position of the great rusty padlock with his hands.

It gave abruptly; with a snap it unclasped and fell from the staples. He was taken by surprise by the locker doors; relieved of the restricting lock they burst forward. George put his arms up instinctively against them, so forcibly did they open. And then against him, into his arms, so suddenly, so unexpectedly that it was only instinct that made him hold on, fell a body.

Cold as deepest night, cold as the sea itself, it was. He felt smooth flesh, contours, and as reason took the place of shocked surprise, a terrible thought came to him. For the contours were of a girl, a girl in swimming suit; the face, as it had lolled for an instant against his, had made known icy lips, and long hair billowed softly against him.

In the darkness he could not know. George laid the figure down gently and groped in the all but impenetrable darkness for his flashlight. But still a moment! That new rocking . . . was not alone his motion. He looked quickly sternward, and the boat as suddenly lurched to one side . . . unmistakably now, for this was no action of the sea but was as though . . . as though *someone,* or *something* was getting in over the sides, into the boat. From the sea it had come, whatever it was. And now, yes, there *was* a dark something hulking back there, his straining eyes told him. Fear lent urgency to his groping fingers. Finally they closed on the metal casing of the torch. His gloom-accustomed eyes saw that the black thing in the boat had shifted position . . . was coming . . . coming towards him.

His fumbling fingers found the switch and the flashlight beamed out. Thornhill spoke then too, a rattle of words that he somehow hoped would ally themselves with the light in his defense.

He wasn't sure what he said. Excuses, how he came to be here, drifting away from shore, he hadn't *meant* to . . . excuses. The sound of his voice, alone there on the dark water with nothing but night on all sides, was desolate. For the other did not answer him back. And somehow this was no more a surprise than that the sea had not answered.

The fisherman came forward slowly, his dark-shrouded figure huge now that he was not sitting; huge and bent all at once. The slouch hat, water-soaked like the rest of the man—why, he must've been swimming, what in the world would a man be swimming for in the middle of the night, and with all his clothes on?—the great, knobby hands hanging.

George said no more but kept his light full on the fisherman. As the black figure came nearer, Thornhill saw the eyes; red they were, red and inflamed, not like those of a human who walks beneath the sun. And the face—the whole visage almost hypnotized George of his remaining strength—was monstrous, now so close upon him.

He looked into it, its salt-streaked lumpiness, its swollen, profane features, its satanic immobility, its changeless expression of purpose withal . . . and then in the fisherman's overwhelming attack the flashlight fell and smashed on the boat bottom and night came down around them again.

The huge arms of the boatman wrapped themselves around Thornhill, the sea-soaked clothes flapped against him, and the monstrous, cruel weight bore him to the boat floor. George fought back desperately, but his efforts were puny against the creature who opposed him. His head smashing against the boat's clinker sides sent his senses reeling. He was aware that the fisherman now was forcing him over the rail, but he could offer little resistance. The two struggling on the boat's side caused the old vessel to list in that direction. The gunwales were awash as the boatman, with incredible strength, forced Thornhill's head and shoulders out, over and down into the cold, black water.

Gasping and blowing now, his head out of water only when the pendulum-sway of the boat carried the gunwale clear of the

water, George felt that his neck was being broken. And inexorably, he was being forced out of the boat into the water. Giant hands had fastened on his throat, were twisting him, taking his air away, giving him sea water instead, giving him excruciating pain instead. With what George knew to be the last of consciousness, his nose caught up the smell of the man—the sea, fish, mud—it was overpowering, sickening. Or was this dying? He had not breathed for hours, it seemed. His neck had been seemingly broken long ago and cold salt water ran in and out of his mouth and nose. He lay, he knew, limp like a lifeless thing.

AND then the weight shifted suddenly. The hands were away from his throat. Sometime while they had been struggling the moon had impatiently shaken off the clouds that had obscured it earlier in the night. George could make out the great, terrible head turning and looking sternward. The fisherman's attention was no longer on him.

Without moving, George's eyes swiveled, slit-lidded, his strength returned slowly. During the battle *she* had moved. Her body had rolled across the slanted deck, had touched perhaps the boatman's foot, taking his attention away from the task of destruction.

The overpowering weight was wholly gone from Thornhill now. The fisherman had moved away; George could follow the scene as he lay. The moonlight could do little to disperse the aura of shadow and gloom that surrounded the dark-shrouded fisherman but it lit up the limp, lovely form of the girl as the creature bent over her. The bathing cap was gone and long hay-colored hair fell around her pretty face, a prettiness forever frozen there. But it was the same girl, it was Junie, the flowered bathing suit, the brightly colored bra over her proud, high breasts.

The fisherman took her in his arms with a sudden movement that was at once both brutal and possessive. He seemed to look into her eyes, his own salt-encrusted features but inches from her face, mask-like wax in the moonlight, still lovely. It was as though they enacted a strange love scene here in the softly rocking boat to the silent witness of the sea and night, for he held her for a long time, her flaxen hair blowing against his face, her arms hanging limply, submissively in the embrace. It was as though the monstrous fisherman-creature was entranced by what he saw, and George felt it too. Then the tableau ended.

Slowly, carefully, methodically he stowed her back into the locker from whence she had come. He picked up one huge padlock from the deck, fitted it carefully to the staples, snapped it into place, locking his beautiful prize away there from the night. And then he turned to complete his interrupted task.

Thornhill used that last moment to save his life. The spell was ended. With what returning strength he had, he forced himself suddenly over the side into the water, evading the lumbering thing that had turned from its loathsome, worshipful contemplation to the task of killing. For the first several yards he sank beneath the surface and stroked along as far as he could below water. Luck was with him, for when he rose to the surface, bunched clouds had again taken the moon away from the sky.

George swam as he never had before. The water sounds were in his ears, his pounding arms and churning legs and thumping heart. A hundred times he thought there were other sounds but there was no time, no strength to look, to think beyond that terrible, frantic flight through black water. In the darkness as he swam on, he could not be sure if the sounds were his own or if there were noises of pursuit. For the first few agonizing minutes he half-expected to see suddenly beside him that sinister old boat, its shrouded figure and its stern locker with cargo of death. Or the fisherman, himself, would rise up from hidden places of the sea.

But after a while Thornhill gave more attention to his whereabouts. There were no sounds when he floated quietly but the bell buoy at the Point; nothing to see but the blinker there. They told him direction, and finally he made the shore, collapsing

into his coupe still parked in the bushes at beachside.

IT WAS hard to manufacture a story for the authorities, and yet he wanted a search made for the fisherman. He told the truth about his camera—that much would be believed—and then added that he thought he had seen a body picked up by a fisherman offshore just as night came on. The authorities were politely skeptical, but they would check. Some days later they reported that no such boat or fisherman as described was in that vicinity. And no report of a body either. And surely there *would've* been a report. No one finding a dead body keeps it a secret, one official snorted.

Junie was never found. It reminded Thornhill of a poem he had learned as a youngster; two lines he remembered well:

Some he gives up;
But the choicest he keeps.

Ralph came to see Thornhill one day. They talked, and the boy was pathetically grateful for the pictures of that last swimming party. There were some good ones of Junie, and though the youngster had to turn away for a moment, his big hands clenched for control, he was evidently pleased to have the snapshots. There was much that Thornhill didn't talk about. The scarf around his neck he blamed on sunburn; why go into what had happened? Some things you just don't talk about. He said he'd had a fall, to explain his battered appearance, let it go at that.

Strange, but sometimes even now that *smell* assailed his nostrils. Of the sea and of things from the sea. He hoped it would go, and in the going, take with it recollections he did not care to live with the rest of his days. Recollections of that evil night: he recalled how he had found a piece of a huge crab-pincers in his neck, unnoticed in the escape, but hurting when he got home, soon festering. And how he had kept finding seaweed and other things of the sea in his clothes.

The pictures were the strangest. Oh, not the ones taken on that fateful day. But others, others taken around the world the way he'd been doing for years. You won't *believe* it in the telling but you could *see* it. In some of his best pictures too. His prize ones, framed, among his collection of best seascapes and scenes. The *same* battered old longboat; with the funny cabin-locker at back. And the *same* dark-shrouded figure . . . fishing . . . always fishing the same.

As he looked at the pictures—oh the comparison was unmistakable—his memory needled him. Each of these pictures *had* a memory . . . and each came, as tragedy does, reluctantly from out of the past . . . the white-toothed grinning diver at Pearl for instance, jumping for tourist coins—he'd not come up; and see, there's the *fisherman* in the background. Then the little girl who'd fallen off the excursion boat on the Thames. And yes, the same *fisherman* in his sinister boat. The long-ago accident in the Norwegian fjord, the grim "man overboard" excitement (he'd been taking pictures of the beautiful scenery when it happened). And look here, see? There were others, many others. But memories can be tricky, Thornhill knew. Only *pictures* don't lie.

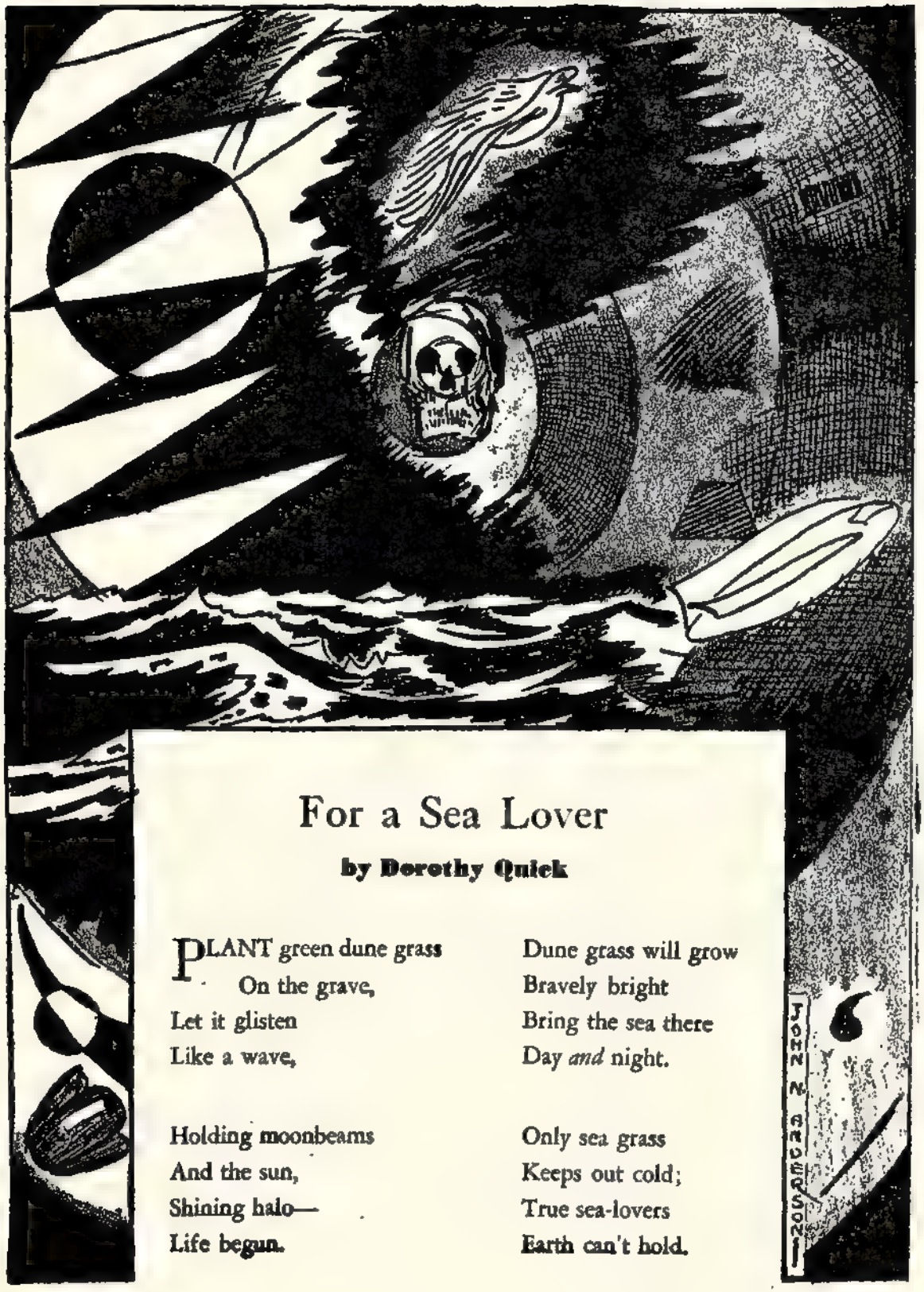
He had a fine one of the fisherman at Crescent Beach. From the first time he'd come the closest, circled, shooting with his camera. You could see the evil face, the black-shrouded figure, the old boat, it's looming locker. Caught, imprisoned on his film. A fine picture, you would say. Worthy for inclusion in his collection.

It came back to him again, the childhood poem; about a mythical creature of the deep.

Some he gives up;
But the choicest he keeps.

Oh, he would remember this time. Perhaps there would be another Junie somewhere some day; remembering would help. He would title his picture:

"DAVEY JONES' LOCKER."



For a Sea Lover

by Dorothy Quick

PLANT green dune grass
On the grave,
Let it glisten
Like a wave,

Holding moonbeams
And the sun,
Shining halo—
Life begun.

Dune grass will grow
Bravely bright
Bring the sea there
Day *and* night.

Only sea grass
Keeps out cold;
True sea-lovers
Earth can't hold.

Something From Out There

Heading by Hannes Bok

By August Derleth

THERE is a tendency on the part of the vast majority of people not only to take one another for granted, but to take all the aspects of their existence in the same manner. I sometimes think we are all too prone to accept as immutable law the scientific order of things, and not ready enough to challenge that order. Yet scientific laws are being altered and broken daily; new concepts come to the fore and take the place of the old; and they in turn are replaced by yet newer theories based on seemingly equally refutable facts.

But in actuality many only recently discovered facts have their beginnings in time before man's recording, and it was certainly in such a distant past that the so-called "Malvern mystery" had its origin. To some extent it is a mystery still, for no one can satisfactorily explain what was found at Hydestall, nor where it came from, nor how it came to be there in the first place.

My own involvement in the mystery dated only to the night the Lynwold constable, John Slade, roused me from sleep by pounding on the door of my combined office and home and, on my raising a window to call down, told me he had brought Geoffrey Malvern to see Dr. William Currie. "Found him out of his head," offered Slade in brief explanation. I dressed, went downstairs, and helped Slade bring the young man into my office, where he managed to sit down without collapsing, though he seemed ever on the verge of falling together; there he huddled, hands covering his face, shuddering and trembling as if from the effects of a profound shock.

I glanced at Slade, who stood fingering the rough stubble on his chin, and my eyes apparently asked the question that was on my tongue, for Slade shook his head helplessly and shrugged; so it was obvious that he had come upon Geoffrey in this condition, and brought him directly to my office. I went over to Geoffrey and put my hand gently but firmly on his shoulder.

He groaned. But in a moment his hands slid away from his face and he looked up. I was unable to keep from betraying my surprise: I could hardly believe that this drawn, chalk-pale, mud-splattered face, with blank, unrecognizing eyes yet lit with a burning, intense, haunted light, could be the face of Lord Malvern's son. Though there was not the slightest sign of recognition, the expression on his face, the intentness of his eyes now that they had become accustomed to the light, were evidence that he looked at someone or something he saw in his mind's eye, for his face began to work, his lips twisting and trembling, and his fingers clenched.

"What happened, Geoffrey?" I asked persuasively.

At the sound of my voice, he doubled up once more, huddling in the chair, burying his distraught face in his hands, and made a kind of whimpering, moaning sound, as of a man in deadly terror—one of the most unpleasant sounds a medical man can hear.

IT WAS then, when he opened his hands wider than before, that the stone dropped from one of them and fell to the floor. Geoffrey did not appear to have noticed his loss; so I stooped and retrieved it. It was a queer, oddly-shaped stone in the form of a five-pointed star, suggesting manufacture; and yet its appearance gave the lie to that suggestion. Nevertheless, it was in part at least the product of human hands; for it bore an inscription, now partly encrusted over, but one I felt confident could be read. Indeed, I could make out three letters of what appeared to be a signature following the inscription: *AV.V.* . . . The age of the stone was indeterminable, but the inscription being Latin, its general aspect and its encrustations, which suggested that the stone

. . . Evil genii who inhabited outer space before the world was born.

had been in the sea, indicated that it was at least several centuries old.

But the most curious aspect of the stone and that first contact with it was this: I had no sooner taken it up than I was conscious of a strange sense of power, a kind of benign strength that seemed to flow through me as a medium from some other place; this was a sensation I was destined never to be without as long as the stone was on my person. Moreover, there was in addition as noticeable a sense of urgent direction, as if there was something connected with the stone that most vitally needed to be done. It seems to me now, writing in retrospect, that it was this more than Malvern's condition which impelled me to probe into the mystery and so perhaps save Lynwold and the surrounding countryside from the horror which might have broken loose upon them.

At the moment, however, I was too disturbed to heed these strong impressions. I held the stone before Geoffrey's eyes, raising his head by his tousled dark hair, and forcing him to look at it.

"Where did you get this, Geoffrey?" I asked.

"The stone!" he murmured. For a moment his eyes were clear of the haunting horror that filled them, but he gave no sign of having heard my question. Then he began to sway a little, back and forth, muttering and murmuring brokenly to himself, and groaning as if in physical agony.

Clearly, nothing could be done, save to give him a sedative and get him to bed. This I did, sending Slade to take him in my car to Lord Malvern's gaunt old home up the sea-coast. Then I telephoned Lord Malvern to explain that Geoffrey had been found wandering on the streets in a dazed condition, saying that I had given him a sedative and recommending that he be put to bed at once. I promised to be up in the morning and take a look at him. Lord Malvern was unusually abrupt, but this I interpreted as prompted by his suspicion that his son had been up to mischief, for relations were strained between father and son, owing to Geoffrey's not infrequent escapades.

IT WAS not until the following day that I learned Geoffrey Malvern's movements in outline. He had set out from home alone the previous morning for a long walk over the lowlands near the seashore. In a meandering way he had made for the ruined priory near his father's estate, which he had reached shortly after noon. At about four in the afternoon, he had stopped off at a tavern near the priory along the coast road and eaten a light lunch; subsequently he had paused briefly at the small cottage where Malvern's former gardener now lived. The young man had seemed quite natural; both the tavern-keeper and the ex-gardener testified that Geoffrey had joked quite heartily before continuing on his way.

He had been seen returning to the priory before five o'clock, and several Lynwold motorists had seen him reading in the shade of a yew grove near the ruins during the course of the hours between five and dusk. At or near dusk, Jeremy Cotton, a schoolmaster, had passed the priory on foot, and, catching sight of Geoffrey, had cut off the coast road and into the priory grounds to talk to him. Geoffrey had been at this time busy poking about the ruins. When Cotton came up, he had evidently just come upon a queer sort of stone which he had shown to the schoolmaster; Cotton's description of it, and his recital of their attempt to decipher its inscription, convinced me that the stone was identical with the one now in my possession. Cotton remembered that Geoffrey had been intensely curious about the star-shaped stone; he had been struck at the time by what he now thoughtfully termed an "undue fascination." Asked about the book Geoffrey had been carrying, Cotton identified it as James' *Cathedrals of England*, and added that Geoffrey had told him he intended to visit the ruined Cathedral of Hydestall, which loomed just over the horizon not far from the priory.

These facts I managed to establish. Thereafter followed a blank interval, and then, shortly after midnight, occurred Geoffrey's entrance into Lynwold, in the condition in which Slade had found him. Something had happened in that interval between dusk and midnight to temporarily

unbalance Geoffrey Malvern. The mystery intrigued me more than anything in my previous experience, and I was, moreover impelled to solve it, I know now, by a power beyond my control, though I had not anticipated at that time that Geoffrey Malvern might recover and be able to tell his own story, confirming such discoveries as were made.

FAR from having any light thrown on the mystery in my visit to Malvern-by-the-Sea that morning, I was more mystified than ever—not so much by Geoffrey's condition, which had changed very little; but rather because of Lord Malvern's attitude. He asked me to say nothing of the affair to anyone, and in the course of his conversation with me he dropped several hints that seemed to link Geoffrey's inexplicable madness with certain of the young man's Oxford activities. However, he did not seem to want the mystery investigated at all, and yet in his reference to the Oxford episodes as scandalous, Lord Malvern provided the second of the clues which was to solve the puzzle. The first was the star-stone itself, but this I did not then know. But I began to wonder that evening whether there might not be some connection between some affair at Oxford and the mutterings of Malvern in delirium? Perhaps even between the five-pointed stone and the Oxford scandals? I remembered distinctly that several disgraceful occurrences had led to the sending down of four young men from Oxford, and only Geoffrey's influence had saved him from a like fate.

So, that evening I turned to the stone and cleaned away some of the encrustations so that I could decipher the inscription on it. Fortunately, the most important parts of the inscription could still be read, though they required study, and even the fact that all the key words were present did not make my task much lighter. Such words and letters as had been rubbed completely away were few, and could easily be supplied. The inscription, when I had translated it, was enigmatic and vague. It read:

The five-pointed star being the key, with this key I imprison you in the Name of Him Who created all things, Spawn of Elder Evil, Accursed in the Sight of God, Follower of Mad Cthulhu, who dared return from ever damned R'lyeh, I imprison you. May none ever effect your freedom.

Augustine, Bishop

The inscription appeared to be that of Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, famed among churchmen. This was the first intimation of fact I had in regard to the stone's actual age.

THE translation strengthened the connection in my mind between the stone and Geoffrey's derangement. And did the stone not refer to "dark things" by inference at least in its inscription? There had been "dark things" done at Oxford, according to guarded accounts which had been made public. I began to believe then that the key to the mystery might possibly lie in the Oxford activities, or, if not the key, at least some tenable explanation that might help to discover the key. Why not, I thought, ask down one or two of the boys who had been dismissed from Oxford and question them frankly about the affairs which had brought them to disgrace?

Accordingly, I dispatched a wire to Soames Hemery, whose address I found on a letter he had sent to the *Times* anent the affair which had resulted in his being sent down from college. I suggested that Hemery bring along one or two of the other young men implicated in the scandal, if possible, and explained that Geoffrey's health and well-being lay in the balance.

Hemery and Duncan Vernon, both friends of Geoffrey, arrived early next morning. Both seemed to be energetic and enthusiastic young men, though with a certain air of restraint about them, and both were anxious to be of all assistance possible. Their questions were curiously insistent once they knew Geoffrey's condition. Above all, what had Geoffrey said?

"Nothing coherent," I answered promptly. And yet I could not help reflecting that he had spoken distinctly enough, if one but

had the keys to his subject. He had said several times, "Something from out there!" I repeated this, and mentioned the star-stone Geoffrey had been carrying.

Vernon's eyes were far away, and there was a slight, if troubled smile on his lips. "You saw the stone, Doctor?" he asked presently. "What became of it?"

I went to the cabinet where I had put the five-pointed star-stone and brought it, together with the inscription and my translation, to Vernon. Hemery, too, came crowding close, and the two of them, unable to conceal a mounting excitement, handled the stone wonderingly.

"He did find it then," Vernon murmured. "Pried it off something, by the look of it."

"And called it out," added Hemery.

"This translation is excellent, Doctor," said Vernon.

"I'm afraid you have some knowledge I don't have," I admitted.

At this point our discussion was interrupted by Slade, who came in hurriedly, and said without preamble, "Old Cramton's been found dead and they want you to examine his body."

Cramton was a solitary fisherman who lived in a hut on the far side of Lynwold. I assumed instantly that his death was a natural one, since he had been an old man for as long as I could remember.

"What seems to have taken him off?" I asked conversationally.

"Nobody knows. He was found in the cave those boys discovered under the old priory."

Hemery and Vernon leaned forward, suddenly interested. I, too, was surprised at mention of the priory, and at the introduction of a hitherto unknown cave beneath it.

"One thing at a time, John," I said. "What boys?"

"The three who got lost yesterday, Doctor."

"I'm afraid I know nothing about them," I admitted. "Suppose you just tell us."

"Henry Kopps' two boys, and Jibber Cloy's Albert, they were," said Slade, and launched into his story, which was simple enough.

ON THE afternoon of the previous day, the three small boys had gone up to the ruins of the priory and failed to come back. Dusk fell, and night came down, and still the boys did not return. A group of older boys set out to look for them, and found them at last, safe on the seashore far beyond Lynwold and still farther from the priory, dazed and frightened, and with no idea how they had got there. Questions put to them had brought forth a queer story. They had gone to the ruins, where they had found a cave and passageway leading beneath, and had gone down to explore. They had crept along the cave until they had come upon a queer bundle in the darkness. They had felt around this, it being too dark to see anything, and had pulled a button off what seemed to be a coat or cloak. Then their hands had come into contact with a face, and they had got terribly frightened and had run. They thought they were lost, and for a long time wandered around in a perfect maze of caves, in some of which there was water—lots of it—until finally they had come out on the seashore, with no idea where they were until the exploring party had come upon them. That was well after midnight. Had they seen anything at the priory? Yes, they had. Just at dusk, but there was no describing it. "Like something from the animal park in London," said one of the boys.

The button the boys had found was identified as an old brass button belonging to a coat well-known as the property of Cramton. He was accordingly sent for, but could not be found. It came out finally that he had not been seen for the last few days—not since the evening of Geoffrey's strange attack. The button, coupled with the disappearance of the fisherman and the story of the curious bundle with the face the boys had felt, caused a search for his body. It had been found in the priory cave when the tide was low, but in a strange, incomprehensible condition. As medical examiner, I was needed at the undertaker's shop.

The suggested connection with Geoffrey's experience was too patent to ignore. I wasted no time asking further questions but, inviting my guests to accompany me, went

along with Slade to view Cramton's body, which was indeed in a remarkable condition —cold almost to iciness, and as rigid. He might well have been frozen, if this had not been so utterly impossible. As it was, the cause of death could be set down to whatever it was had crushed Cramton; for he was crushed, fully as much as if the priory had collapsed on him, his bones splintered and his flesh horribly mangled.

It was the sight of Cramton's body which impelled Geoffrey's young friends to forego further reticence. I had felt that they were in possession of information I did not have, but I realized also that both were reluctant to speak. Sight of Cramton, however, had an ominously depressing effect on both of my companions, though it was not until I had signed the certificate and left the undertaker's shop that they broke their silence.

"I'm afraid that somehow we've got into something too dangerous to drop," said Hemery. "It isn't only Geoffrey who's in danger—there's not much to be done for him. I may as well tell you, Dr. Currie, if Geoffrey hadn't had hold of that star-stone, he'd have been found like that fellow back there."

"Go on," I said quietly. "I'm beginning to see that I was right in suspecting that this thing had its origin in your 'dark doings' at Oxford."

Neither denied it. Vernon admitted that their expulsion had been on justifiable grounds.

And what were the "doings"?

Old magic, sorcery—worse than that. They had practised it, not really seriously, of course. But being sent down had put a more uncompromising aspect on the affair.

"But what exactly did you do?" I asked.

VERNON took up the story. "The whole business had an accidental beginning. Geoff shouldn't have gone in search of the stone alone. Perhaps it was because of our group he believed least; if he'd had more faith, he'd have known what he was likely to find if he tried to get at the secret of the star-stone.

"It was by accident that we stumbled on a strange chapter of occult lore that would have been much better hidden. We were students of occult literature, and we had often come upon curious hints and suggestions of unnamable horrors—not precisely the kind of thing you run across in Black Mass jargon—and there were always strange names allied to such hints, and references to the Older Gods, the Ancient Ones, and certain others purporting to be mad genii of evil who inhabited outer space before the world was born, and who descended to ravage Earth and were vanquished by the Elder Gods and banished to various parts of the cosmos—one of them to the bottom of the sea, where its accursed spawn is reputed to live deep in caverns in a lost sea kingdom variously called R'lyeh or Ryah or Ryehe.

"Of course, these references had no meaning for us; they were tantalizing, certainly, with their very real suggestions of outer horrors, and in their curious parallelism to similar legends in the ancient lore of primitive peoples in all parts of the globe. But at length Hemery stumbled on a set of books that told us things hidden for centuries—one by a reputedly mad Arab, another by a German doctor, and finally the *Confessions* of Clithanus, a monk who was likewise supposed somewhat deranged. At the same time another of us found disturbing parallels in the fiction of certain British and American writers, suggesting that they, too, were aware of this strange mythology.

"Clithanus made direct mention of Hydestall—that is, the old cathedral—and told a story of Augustine—yes, the St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, who visited Hydestall, where Clithanus was. Clithanus had found on the seacoast the five-pointed stone, emblem of the power of the Elder Gods, and feared by the Ancient Ones and their minions. There are in the *Confessions* disquieting hints of sea passages, unmentionable chambers and horrors beneath the sea off the coast from Hydestall, and an opening on the coast somewhere along here."

"Then it's possible," I put in, "that the 'passages' in which those three boys who

were lost yesterday are the same ones the monk had reference to?"

HEMERY nodded, and went on with the story Vernon had begun. "Clithanus writes of furtive treks down into the passages, and of faint horribly suggestive sounds from far below the surface of the sea. The displacement or removal of the stone Clithanus found seems to have left an opening for something out of the depths, away from a lost sea kingdom—or some place, let us just say, in the sea. At that point, Clithanus became frightened and took his fright to Augustine. It was the bishop who caused the thing, by the power of the five-pointed star-stone, to be imprisoned in a stone casket far beneath the cellars of the priory near the cathedral. In an old letter, Augustine writes that the monk was mad, that he, Augustine, had banished him to Rome, and it is true that the *Confessions* were originally published in Rome. But of the thing that came, Augustine says nothing save for one cryptic line written to his Pope: 'Something from out there returned to these shores, and I have attended to it.' There is nothing more."

I drew the inference that the young men intended I should.

"Then you think that something like the 'thing' mentioned by Clithanus and Augustine, killed Cramton, frightened Geoffrey Malvern, and was seen by the three boys lost in the passages?"

Both nodded without hesitation.

"There are strange stories in certain of those old books—of the need these evil beings have of the life force drawn from human beings, the need for sacrifice of at least three living men to gain sufficient power to enable them to resume once again their former nefarious activities. One man hereabouts is dead—so far there would not seem to have been more. The old legends all describe the victims as icy, frozen and crushed, as Cramton was found. I'm afraid, Doctor, that the thing is even now lurking about the priory in search of other victims. Cramton vanished on the night Geoff unwittingly liberated it by removing the stone. It is left for us to send this thing back, if we can, back to the sunken kingdom from which it came."

"And the sooner we reach the priory, the better," added Vernon.

"Yes, it's dusk now; the thing isn't likely to walk by light—not yet. We shall need to take the stone."

I had listened to this fantastic tale with the medical man's known skepticism. But there was a quiet persuasiveness about both Vernon and Hemery which carried its own conviction. Moreover, it could not be gainsaid that, had they intended a hoax, either could have concocted a far more credible tale. Their story, in fact, was so preposterous as to just possibly be true, and it did fit such facts as were available to any disinterested observer. Even if but part of their tale were true, there was certainly something lethal at the priory, and some attempt must be made to get at it.

A FAINT, silvery sickle of moon shone low in the afterglow when the three of us emerged from the house. I carried the star-stone in my own pocket, one hand closed over its rough outlines, the inscription pressed against my palm. The evening was quiet, save for a faint wind off the sea. Apart from a casual remark about the mildness of the evening by Hemey, and my own reply, there was no conversation.

We walked to the outskirts of Lynwold, and were just about to short-cut across fields, when I saw a figure running down the road toward us. I recognized him as Jasper Wayne, a retired farmer who lived near the priory.

Wayne came on at a recklessly headlong speed, shouting and crying out to us, for he had seen us also. He came up presently to where we waited, but it took a few moments before he had calmed down sufficiently to speak coherently, and then the story he told was garbled. But it was no less alarming, for it supplemented damnably the tale I had listened to so dubiously only a short time ago.

Wayne had been outside just at sundown, sweeping the countryside through a pair of field-glasses. Happening to look toward

the priory, his eye was caught by a shadowy movement. He had fixed his glasses on the ruins, just as his man, Herbert Green, who had been coming down the coast road with the horses, approached the priory. As Green came abreast of the ruins, the shadow reappeared, took on substance, and seemed to roll awkwardly with some speed toward the road. The horses leaped forward, but not quickly enough to prevent the shadowy thing from throwing itself upon Green. For a few moments Green had been obscured, the horses dragging both him and the attacking shadow along the road in a cloud of dust. Then the thing rolled away, vanishing once again in the darkness shrouding the ruins. The horses had dragged Green to the farm, but Green was oddly dead—icy cold, crushed horribly.

"Where is he?" I asked.

"Over on the verandah at my place, covered with a blanket. The horses got away, and I was just coming in for you—but he's dead, he don't need a doctor."

"We'll go on," I said. "You keep on to Lynwold for the undertaker. If we're not at your place when you get back, we'll have gone on to the priory."

Wayne started away again through the deepening twilight.

"That makes two," said Hemery quietly, but his voice betrayed that he was deeply upset.

WE FOUND Herbert Green's body at the farmhouse of Jasper Wayne. The marks showing where the body had been dragged away from the traces of the horses were still in evidence. I drew back the blanket—and from that examination I turned away in badly shaken state, reflected in my companions. For Green's was an exact repetition of Cramton's death—the same iciness, the same rigidity, the same crushed pulp. One such case had been enough to disturb me; a second was more than enough to fill me with terror and horror—not only because of what had happened, but because of what might yet take place in the light of the story Hemery and Vernon had told.

Yet it was certain that if any solution were to be found, it lay within our power to seek and find it. There was nothing to be gained here at the mutilated body of the second victim to fall to the thing at the priory; there was everything to be gained by proceeding without further delay to the priory itself and prevent, if possible, any further outrage.

The shadows were deepening around the ruins as we approached the priory. There was neither sound nor movement among the ruins. For what, after all, were we searching? What manner of thing? I put my question in a whisper to Vernon.

"I've no more idea than you," he replied. "Something horrible beyond description, or else it would never have driven Geoff mad. But if the thing's here, it will feel the power emanating from the stone."

We waited in motionless silence. The night's voices had diminished to the sound of the resurgent waves of the nearby sea and the faraway cries of a skycoasting night-

jar. For a long few minutes the scene held. Then there rose a new sound, fraught with suggestive terror, a lumbering, scraping sound, accompanied by a terrible slavering. The sounds came from below the level at which we sat, from that level where, presumably, the legendary stone casket had been hidden.

"Thank God we have the stone!" murmured Vernon.

Abruptly an indescribable shape rose up among the ruins, giving forth a low ululation that seemed to roll up from deep within its misshapen hulk. It hesitated for but a moment, then rolled clumsily out into the lowland surrounding the ruins. There it gathered speed as it moved forward.

"Give me the stone," asked Vernon.

I surrendered it without hesitation.

Vernon shouted and ran toward the thing, Hemery and myself close behind him. But the entity from the ruins had apparently not seen us; it moved steadily toward the cathedral at a speed which forced us to exert ourselves to the utmost to keep up with it. Even so, it vanished into the ruined church before we could catch up to it. Once at the cathedral's roofless walls, Vernon called a halt. It would not do for us to separate, he warned, lest the thing caught Hemery or myself alone, and increased its own power by killing one of us separated from the strength of the stone, which might then be powerless against it.

ACCORDINGLY the three of us entered the shadowed corridors of the cathedral together in search of our quarry. We crept silently through the ruins and back again, and then, becoming bolder, went forward with less care. But the thing was not in evidence. It had altered its course somewhere. Could it have doubled back to Wayne's house, I wondered apprehensively. After half an hour, my companions were despondent and spoke of returning either to the ruins of the priory or to Lynwold.

It was then that a shocking, greenish hulk rose from the floor of the corridor before us and came directly toward us. At once Vernon faced it with the stone. The thing paused—but only for a moment; then a tentacle lashed forth and struck at Hemery. But Vernon sprang forward, bearing the stone as a sheath, and the thing in the corridor fell back, whistling weirdly. Out of the darkness before us shone a trio of cruel, malignant eyes, and the opening which served as its mouth gaped yawningly below. At the same moment, its body began to glow with an eerie sea-green light. Then once more the thing came at us.

What happened after that remains like a nightmare of mad and fantastic images in my memory. The battle with the monster from outside seemed endless, but eventually it lumbered awkwardly away from Hydestall Cathedral and made for the priory. There it fought anew, fought a long time before it vanished into the depths of an underground passage.

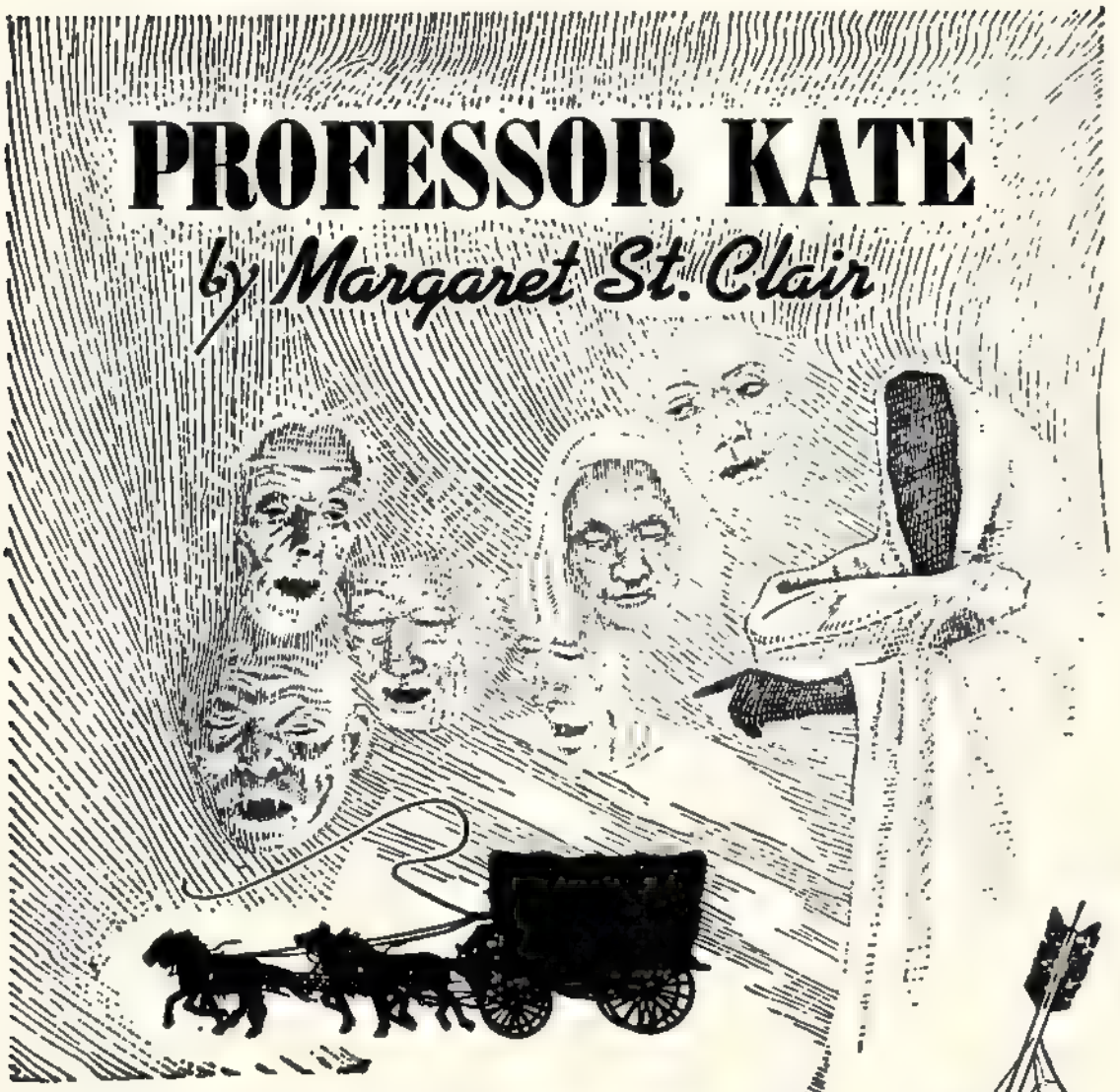
I suppose that at the end we were no longer human in our battle with the inhuman monster, fighting it back inch by inch, forcing its retreat until at last it crouched in hiding in the very casket from which it had been liberated when Geoffrey Malvern—as we learned later—had so ill-advisedly pried the star-stone off the lid. How long the battle lasted I could not say, but it was dawn when the three of us returned from the seacoast, exhausted. The casket, sealed once more by the stone, lay in the ocean's depths, and already the events of the night seemed like a tenuous and incredible nightmare, as unreal as the amorphous being which had so briefly returned to its ancient life in the priory ruins.

But as to whence it came, in truth, no one could tell. Nor could anyone say by what laws it had existed for so many centuries, to fatten and grow again in a time far beyond its own, to bring its horror into a distant future. And what if sometime in years to come another searcher takes up the stone once more and looses the thing from outside anew? Who knows? In other corners of this earth there may be others biding their time.

The dead—don't you see?—the dead stick together.

PROFESSOR KATE

by Margaret St. Clair



"THE boy that directed us on this road, pa," Kate said, leaning forward to speak to the man in the front seat, "—do you think he was real?"

John Bender Senior turned and regarded her. "What you mean by that, Käter?" he asked sternly. He had to raise his voice to be heard over the rumble of the wagon wheels.

Kate's fingers moved nervously over the bosom of her shirtwaist. "Why that . . . that he might be one of them we left in the orchard, back on the farm. This road ain't like a road that goes anywhere."

Her father's lean face grew dark with anger. "Stop dot talk, Käter. Stop your mouth."

"*Ja*, stop it, daughter," Mrs. Bender said. Her blue eyes were hard in her large white

face. "Is nonsense, unsinn. How could it be one of dem? Didn't we bind dem to stay before we left?"

Kate sighed and sank back in her seat. Her brother John, who was sitting beside her (he was only her half-brother, she was wont to say with a touch of defiance), slipped his arm around her waist. "You're tired, Kate," he said. "It ain't them dead ones I'm afraid of. I'm afraid of a posse coming after us."

"Oh, do you think there'll be one?" Kate answered vaguely. Once more her hands were moving on her dress.

"Dead sure. Colonel York suspicioned us about his brother. They traced him as far as our farm."

"He didn't come back for the seance, though," Kate replied.

"No. But we knew he'd be back later for sure, with more men. Things was getting hot. That's why we left."

Kate laughed suddenly, a bold, ringing laugh. "Why we left! Didn't we look out the bedroom window that morning and see the ground heaving below in the orchard? Didn't you hear her little voice crying 'Mama! Mama!' the way she did when we buried her? Why we left!"

"I didn't hear or see nothing, Kate. I only said that to . . . to agree with you."

Once more Kate laughed. "You didn't hear anything? Why, you turned as white as a sheet!"

"As a ghost," her brother corrected after a moment had passed. "Make it a ghost, while you're doing it."

THEY jounced on. Bender, hunched over the reins, clucked now and then at the team. Once John said out of a long silence, "This here ain't much of a road, for a fact." Kate looked at him sideways without saying anything.

The sun began to sink. The air, which had been warm with spring earlier in the day, grew colder. A light breeze ruffled the long grass of the prairie. Kate, shivering, let John embrace her without resistance.

Old man Bender turned round to face them. "Hope we find dose houses soon," he said uneasily. "That boy said we'd get to them before night."

Kate raised her head from John's shoulder and looked him full in the eyes. His gaze wavered. He coughed and turned back to the team.

They stopped at last. "Is too dark to drive more," old man Bender said, his voice loud in the sudden silence. "Ve got to sleep here." He looked around the vacant flatness of the prairie, frowning, and then began to unharness the team.

John jumped from the wagon and then turned to help Kate. She was stiff from the long sitting; she almost fell into his arms. Mrs. Bender, meantime, was getting sacks and crocks of provisions out from under the front seat.

"Have an apple, son," she said, holding one out to the young man.

"No. I can't say as I care for the fruit from them trees."

MRS. BENDER began to munch the apple herself. Kate had taken advantage of the distraction to withdraw from John's embrace and wander off. He looked after her, his forehead wrinkled. Then he began to help his mother with the preparations for the evening meal.

Suddenly Kate screamed. It was a high sound, not very loud. John dropped the bread he was holding and ran toward her.

He found her sitting on her heels, her black bombazine skirt drawn tightly around her haunches. She was holding a long thigh bone in one hand.

"It scared me when I first saw it," she said, looking up at him brightly. "The skull, I mean. And look, over there in the grass, there's another one."

John followed her gesture. He kicked the grass apart. After a short time he found the second skeleton, gleaming whitely even in the dim light. He stooped over, hunting, and came up at last with something in his hand.

"It was an Indian," he announced to Kate. "This here's what killed him. An arrow." He showed it to her.

She seemed to lose interest. "Oh, an Indian. Must of been a long time ago."

She cocked her head and listened intently. "John, I hear voices. Not like them on the farm, though. Maybe it's the Indians. Listen!" She held up a hand, warning him.

There was the rustle of the grass, the plaintive note of a mourning dove. "I don't hear nothing," he said. He pulled at his mustache.

"You woudn't 'fess up to it if you did," she said. She giggled. "I want to have a seance, John. 'Member how they called me Professor Kate in the Parsons paper that time I lectured there on spiritualism?" She rose to her feet and faced him. "Maybe a seance would quiet the voices. On the farm it used to. Professor Kate wants to have a seance."

He slapped her. His hand left a red mark on her face, but she made no sign of having felt it. "Stop it, Kate. You want to drive all of us crazy? Why stir them up? And anyhow, it ain't nothing. We'll sleep in the wagon tonight and tomorrow start early. It's only two Indians. Ain't you used to dead people?"

He took her by the hand and led her back to the wagon. Sighing, she stumbled after him. "Do you think we'll get to Vinita tomorrow, John?" she asked. "I'm so tired of riding. Father said we could leave the wagon and take the train once we got to the Indian Territory."

"Sure thing, you bet," he answered, without looking at her. "Get up early, ride all day. It ain't far."

John woke early, while it was still dark. He found water and washed in a cupful of it. After a moment he heard Kate getting down from the wagon. She came up to him, yawning and shivering.

He poured water for her and she scrubbed her face with a handkerchief. She straightened her hair with her hands. "How did you sleep, John?" she asked, putting her head on one side. "Did you rest well?"

"Naw. Why ask? I had dreams."

"Like my dreams, I guess. This ain't a good place. Listen, paw and maw are getting up."

They breakfasted on slabs of bread and cold pork. Old man Bender harnessed up the team and turned the wagon around. "We make a fine quick start," he said. "De stars ain't set yet. Before sun-up, we be back on the right road."

THE pursuers rose nearly as early as the Benders did. The Benders were moved by fear, the posse by hate. As Captain Sanders swung into the saddle, he said to the lieutenant, "Today or tomorrow, sure. We're getting close."

The lieutenant (he, like Sanders, had gained his rank in the Grand Army of the Republic less than ten years before) said flatly, "We're not going to take them back to the county for trial."

Weird and Fantasy Books

Am selling out my entire library of Weird and Fantasy literature. Many hard-to-find and Collectors' items. Send me your "wants" —I may have them. Or send for partial list.

J. E. JOHNS, P. O. Box 6444, Cleveland, O.

"No. You don't try rattlers. We found eleven bodies in the orchard. But what I remember most is the body of the little girl. She must have been still alive when they buried her." The sun rose. The day wore on. At noon the Benders stopped at a farmhouse for water, and learned that they were on the right road. They might be able to make Vinita by dark. Kate, sighing with relief, did not resist when John drew her down under the wagon seat.

Afterward they chatted idly over plans, what they should do with the money they had taken from the travelers who had stopped at the Bender farmhouse. John wanted to start a restaurant in Denison, Kate wanted to keep on with the seances and the lecturing. She spoke of the good luck she'd had curing deafness and epileptic fits. Or the four of them might buy another farm. Why not? They had plenty of rhino, John said.

As the sun began to wester, Kate dozed. She leaned against John, her body swaying to the steady jogging. Once she said petulantly, "Vinita sure is a long way off."

At sundown the posse reached a crossroads. Sanders dismounted to check the wagon tracks. As he grasped the pommel again he was frowning. "They've turned," he told the men with him, gesturing to the right. "They're headed back."

"Why?" asked the lieutenant after a moment.

Sanders shrugged. "The devil knows. May be trying to throw us off the track."

IT WAS quite dark when the wagon stopped, Vinita still unreached. Kate was drunk with sleepiness. John roused her and helped her out.

"Vinita?" she asked as she reached the ground.

"No, Kate. Not yet. First thing tomorrow, I guess."

She stood looking around her. The moon had not risen; it was difficult to see anything. Suddenly she gathered up her skirts and ran like a wild thing. After a moment they heard her screaming, "John! John! We've come back. This is the same place!"

When he got up to her she pointed at the skeleton. She picked up the arrow and handed it to him. "They've brought us back to the same place."

He let the point fall from his fingers. "What do you mean? Who has?"

"The Indians. They wouldn't let us get away. They brought us back. The dead—don't you see, John?—the dead stick together."

He stared at her in the darkness. Then he grasped her by the shoulder and began to pull her after him with desperate energy. "Hurry! Hurry! The wagon! We've got to get away!"

But as they neared the wagon they heard a thunder and a plunging, and then old man Bender's voice crying despairingly, "Whoa! Whoa! Damn you, come back!"

"The team's run off," Kate said simply. "I knew they wouldn't let us get away."

He began to wrench at the wagon sides, tearing off planking. "We'll make a fire, a big fire. They can't get past it. And paw will get out the guns."

"That's right," Kate said, cheering. "And we'll stay awake, all of us. Maybe if. . . ."

There were noises on the other side of the wagon as the night got older. Once old man Bender said, "What's dot whooping?" and Kate laughed.

The fire died down and was replenished with the wagon seats. Kate yawned, and then John and the others. He said, "We've got to stay awake."

About two in the morning Professor Kate realized abruptly that the others were sleeping. She ran from one to the other, shaking them, screaming their names. They wouldn't wake.

Morning came. John said, "Guess we must have gone to sleep, h'um, Kate?"

"I guess so. I remember dreaming. I'm awful tired."

John Bender yawned. "Well, anyway, we're all right. We was silly to worry. And look, the team's come back."

OLD man Bender was silently harnessing the horses. When he was done they climbed in the wagon. The front seat was still intact, but John and his sister had to sit on the floor. After they had driven for

about a mile, Kate said, "Where are we going, paw?"

"To—I can't call the name to mind, daughter."

"Bin—Binecia," she answered, stumbling over the syllables. "I wish we'd hurry up and get there."

"Stop it, Kate," John said. "We will."

In the afternoon Kate said, "I wish we'd pass some houses." Later, when it was almost sunset, she turned to her brother. "Do you know what's going to happen, John?" she asked.

"What?" he replied. It was the first word he had spoken to her since early morning.

"It's going to get dark. And then we'll stop and we'll be back by the Indians. Back by the ashes of our fire. Back where we spent last night." She began to cry.

"No. You're crazy. We must be almost to Venita."

"Venita? We'll never get there. We'll just keep driving, driving, driving. Something's gone wrong with time."

"Be quiet, damn you. I hear horses, voices." He laid his hand over her mouth.

Old Man Bender had stopped the wagon. "Something ahead," he said softly. "You two go look."

They stole forward, tiptoeing. "I can't see good," Kate whispered.

"Hush. It's men with horses. They're bending over something. But I can't see what they're doing. There's a mist."

Kate had turned away. "Let's go back to the wagon," she whispered.

"Why? I want to know what they're doing."

"Oh, I know already."

"Then tell me."

"You know without telling. What they're bending over—"

"Is us. Is our bodies. No! No! I won't have it!"

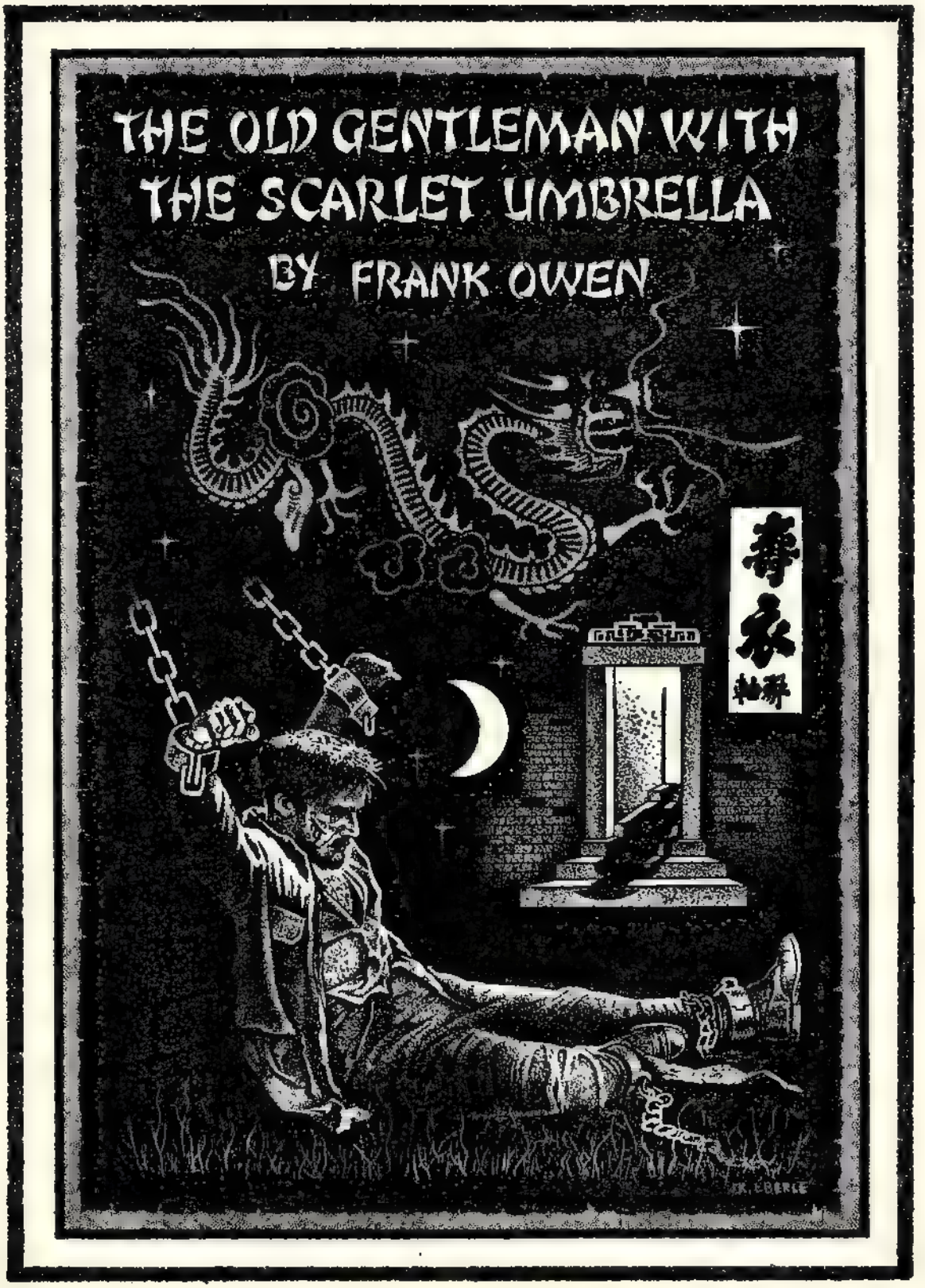
She was wringing her hands and wailing. "Oh, but it is! Last night—last night the Indians didn't let us get away," said Professor Kate.

My Timid Soul

By PAGE COOPER

DEMONS sit on the rim of day
Honing their claws for my timid soul,
Wetting their lips in their lust to flay,
Their black lips flecked with a bitter whey,
As they gurgle a grim and raucous lay.

Quaking, my pallid soul looks out.
Safe in my heart—the puny mole!
Rattling his wings he squeaks a shout.
On frightened pinions he dares to flout
The slavering demons roundabout.



Heading by J. R. Eberle

The worthy doctor's belief in dragons was fixed as his belief in the eclipse of the moon.

DOCTOR SHEN FU sipped his tea languidly. "It is ironic that you should be searching for dragons," he mused, "when plagues of war and famine are sweeping over China, decimating our people as though their lives are of less value than chewed melon seeds."

"At such a time," John Steppling said, "surely we have need for dragons."

"I bow humbly before your wisdom," said the doctor. "I will give you all the help I can."

They sat in a room set aside for tea-drinking in the Drug Shop of a Thousand Years in Hangchow. Fighting had reached the fringe of the city but the doctor was not disturbed. In a land of 450,000,000 people with only 12,000 physicians, a doctor is not carelessly destroyed. Though enemy soldiers had been persuaded by their officers that they were invincible, they knew that they were helpless against the ravages of poison and disease. It was comforting to have a doctor in their midst. How were they to know that Doctor Shen Fu's hatred was more deadly than cobra venom?

"I approach my subject with an open mind," said John Steppling. "I am aware that thirty years ago near the city of Ichang on the Upper Yangtze River, about a thousand miles from the Yellow Sea, the fossils of several dragons were found in a cavern known as the Dragon Cave. According to legend, the cave extended for fifty li and led to the Lung Wong Tung or the Cave of the Dragon King. The length of the largest fossil was seventy feet. It was about two feet thick, with a flat head. An interesting article about it appeared in the Far Eastern Review for December, 1915."

"I refuse to be excited by your disclosures," said Doctor Shen Fu gently, "for my belief in dragons is as fixed as my belief in eclipses of the moon. For more than a thousand years this drug shop has been dispensing drugs in which powdered dragon bones have been prime ingredients. Do you know that the most costly and aromatic of all perfumes is dragon saliva, or that rubies are drops of petrified dragon blood? Our sages have written, 'The small dragon is like a silk caterpillar. The large dragon fills heaven and earth. When it arises, it gallops over the clouds. When it hibernates, it crouches in an abyss. The scaly dragon becomes a true dragon in a thousand years. In five hundred years more he becomes a horned dragon and in a thousand years more he becomes a flying dragon.' The dragon through the ages has embodied our loftiest ideals. But it re-embodied our loftiest ideals.

"Dragons in summer live in the clouds and when they quarrel with each other the clouds are churned into rain. The dragon loves jade and the flesh of swallows, but he seems to have a fear of iron. He is fond of arsenic and if a bamboo grove is deserted he likes to repose therein. In the folklore of all peoples much space is given to dragons. If they do not exist and never have existed, why do your anthropologists write such weighty scrolls about them? However, the Chinese see them in true perspective. For thousands of years dragon robes were reserved exclusively for our Emperors who ruled from a Dragon Throne. It is said in the *Yih King*: 'The chief dragon has his abode in the sky, and all the clouds and vapors, winds and rains are under his control. He can send rain or withhold it at his pleasure. Hence all vegetable life depends upon him.' Therefore throughout the ages of written history the Emperor of China sat on his Dragon Throne, watching over the welfare of his people, and conferred upon them those temporal and spiritual blessings without which they would perish. Now we have no more Emperors and we are beset by one war after another and China is shaken by all the new ways that have been thrust upon her. I am an old man and can remember that in the days of my youth we

had an Emporer and were at peace with the world. But perhaps we are spending to much time over our tea, if that be possible, and you wish to set out on your quest."

"Now shall I begin?" asked Steppling. "Or rather I have begun. What better starting point than this drug shop where powdered dragon bones are sold?"

DOCTOR SHEN FU bowed. "I am honored that you have chosen my humble drug shop for so worthy a purpose. I shall expediate your quest with the limited means at my disposal." He smiled as he added, "And in your discourse you may perhaps spare a few words for beloved Li Po—a Drunken Dragon who has become an immortal."

Steppling smiled. "Dragon, indeed," he said. "Li Po reminds me in many respects of Shakespeare. Poets are the true citizens of the world. Like artists and musicians they speak a language all men understand. We of the west have our dragons also, and quite a few of them could join Li Po under the table though none are his equals in verse. But my quest now, alas, is not one for poets, though it might be for the Chinese coolies who carried a university on their backs to Chungking, and built the Burma Road, in the design of a dragon, with their bare fingers. What chance has any invader against such courage and fortitude as that?"

Doctor Shen Fu looked at John Steppling a long time before he spoke again. Then he asked abruptly, "How would you like me to tell you the story of the Old Gentleman With the Scarlet Umbrella?"

"Nothing would please me more," was the enthusiastic reply.

"He was a thin little wisp of a man, always smiling, always singing bits of verse that children loved. His costume was the simple blue of a coolie. There was nothing distinctive about him except his large scarlet umbrella that he carried with him everywhere. He first came into prominence when the hordes of diminutive Japanese swarmed over China. When they beheld the old gentleman with his scarlet umbrella, they were amused. He reminded them of Punch in the Punch and Judy shows that they had occasionally beheld in their childhood. Of course he wasn't known as Mr. Punch which is eminently English, but for more than a thousand years this little puppet has been beloved by the children of many countries, until he became more illustrious than any king, besides having a perpetual existence.

"Now the Old Gentleman With the Scarlet Umbrella had many idiotic dances, which he performed with little songs. The invaders thought he was feeble-minded. How far wrong they were they had not the means of knowing. These few Chinese who had penetrated his disguise looked at him with inscrutable expressions. Actually he was a physician of renown. He knew all the medicines of the Asiatic pharmacopia and far more. Most of his knowledge had been snatched from experience. That he could speak seven languages was also a help for he was able to read the medical monographs of many nations. He was among other things a spy for the Chinese Military leaders. Since the Japanese considered him a jester, they made no effort to restrain him from going wherever he wished. Oftimes, at great personal risk, he laid aside his umbrella and ministered to the needs of the stricken among his own people. Yes, this merry old gentleman was a harmless dancer, that is, if the bite of sand-viper be harmless. My people have an adage, 'Beware of the man who has a smiling face.' And another, 'If you bow at all, bow low.'

"THE Old Gentleman With the Scarlet Umbrella cared not how much of a fool he made of himself as long as his beloved country was served. Serve it, he did, and well. At the bottom of his umbrella there was a long slim knife, not many times larger than a needle in circumference. A hidden device in the ornate handle released the knife when it could do the most good for China. Since he knew the exact position of the heart, he struck quickly and painlessly. That long slim knife did such strenuous work it was amazing how many enemy officers and soldiers failed to greet

the sun when morning came. Since there was so little blood shed, and merely the smallest dot of a scar on the bodies, the war lords were puzzled. They mulled over the matter, but to no avail. Finally they consulted me. It was an excellent decision. After much reflection, I suggested that their casualties had been bitten by some unknown deadly insect. Reluctantly they rejected this theory because on each body there was but one small red scar. An insect would not strike all its victims in the same spot, and bite only once. Then in an awed voice, I hoarsely whispered that I had heard that hordes of vampire bats were invading China. They came in the night's blackness, fastened themselves to the body of the victims until they had taken their full of blood. They bit as close to the heart as possible. With the dawn they departed to unknown realms.

"The Japanese Generals decided to pursue this explanation a bit further. They set sentries to watch. Since they were to report if they saw any weird bats flying about, they were vastly frightened. Fear, imagination, superstition did the rest. They reported at dawn that they had seen many strange flying creatures. They had tried futilely to catch them. Almost a hundred soldiers died that night, including an appalling number of officers, so the generals accepted my fable. Even without my help, the story got about that the bats were supernatural, probably witches in disguise. The power of hysteria is very droll. The numbers of bats that were reported ran into astonomical figures. Actually no bats existed, merely the bite of the slim knife concealed in a scarlet umbrella. Oh, strange little man who danced and sang so benign and carefree, even when he was beset with gravest danger, for General Hirato did not quite believe the story of the bats. Though he was not devoid of superstition, he nevertheless had been a warrior for the greater part of his life. He had had dealings with the Chinese in Manchuria. They had been able to trick him upon occasion, or so he imagined. He trusted no one, nor was particularly entertained by the Old Gentleman With the Scarlet Umbrella. Odd that such an ancient one should be a traitor to his people by welcoming invaders with such relish. He had a suspicion that the Old Gentleman was not a buffoon at all but an extremely clever actor, an actor with a purpose, what purpose he decided to find out. Unfortunately he made the bad error of writing his thoughts in his eyes. It was not difficult to translate their meaning. What might have happened, alas, can never be found out, for that night he was bitten by one of the bats and succumbed quietly. The Chinese found his death to be entirely delectable.

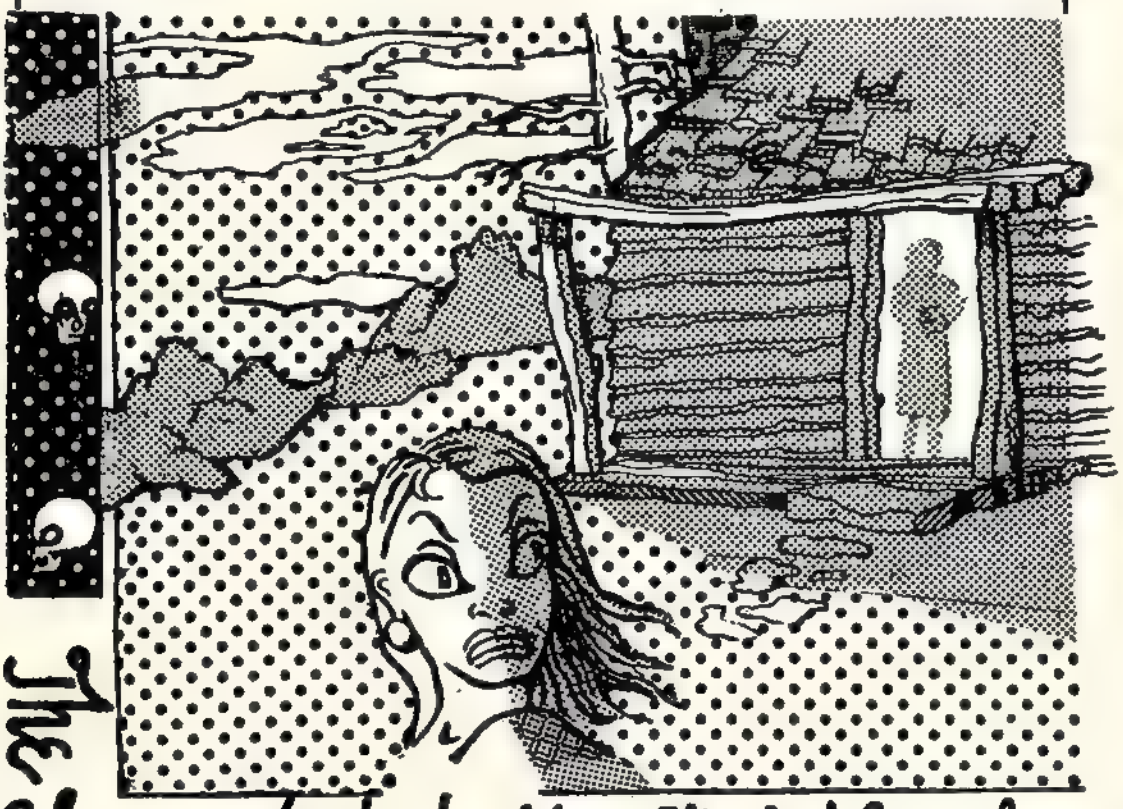
"For centuries, my countrymen have looked on the bat as a symbol of happiness. Certainly in their hour of peril it came to their defence admirably even though it existed only in the imagination of the little men who had set out to conquer all Asia—not for the Asiatics but for the Nipponese. And now a nation of tall men to our north are directing a new invasion by using renegade Chinese as tools. How little they know my people, a nation of farmers, artists and poets who owe allegiance only to their own clan or family. Can it be possible that the bats will return again, bats that exist only because men believe in them enough. Certainly I know there are many men in China who carry scarlet umbrellas."

AS Doctor Shen Fu ceased speaking, Steppling said. "And there were dragons in the land." He paused for a moment, before adding, "I should like to have met that Old Gentleman. Was his name Shen Fu?"

The Doctor smiled. "He was my elder brother. He secured the drugs he needed for ministering to his wounded countrymen from my humble shop, through a secret cavern entrance, a natural entrance quite a distance away. Nature has been kind to the Shen family. This cavern was very convenient for the Old Gentleman, giving him a place to rest when the need of sleep was upon him."

"I wonder how long it will take the Kremlin to realize that when one catches a dragon by the tail it is very difficult to let it go."

What does the census taker do about the unwanted, the unborn?



The Unwanted · by Mary Elizabeth Counselman

TRUDGING up the stony mountain road, with the relentless Alabama sun beating down on my head, I began to wish two things, in order of their intensity: I wished I had a big, cold, frosted-over glass of something—iced tea, lemonade, water, anything *wet*. And I wished I had never applied to my prolific Uncle Sam for this job as census-taker!

I sat down under a gnarled old tree, glaring up at the steep incline ahead of me, and decided that there are entirely too many citizens of the United States, and that they live too far apart. The district I was supposed to cover was a section of the Blue Ridge foothills, in which all the inhabitants were said to have one leg shorter than the other—from living on that sheer cliff of a mountain! Already I had covered the few scattered farms along this winding road that seemed determined to end at the gates of Heaven. Suspicious mountain-eyes had peeked at me from every cranny of wind-worn little shacks, built of slab pine. Lean old hound dogs had run out at me, roaring annihilation, then leaping up to lick me all over the face. Small tow-headed children in flour-sack dresses scattered before me like chickens before a hawk.

But they had to be counted, every blessed one of them. Uncle Sam loved them all, and most of them were on his personal relief-list, up here on Bent Mountain where nothing but honeysuckle and dogwood could be made to grow without a maximum of effort.

Heading by Charles A. Kennedy

I sat for a minute, panting and mopping the perspiration—no, sweat! This was nothing so Emily Post! Then I shifted my big leather folder to the other aching arm and started up the mountain once more. Just ahead, over the tops of scrub pine and oak, I could see a thin curl of smoke—indicating that I had either come to another cabin, or had unfortunately stumbled on somebody's still. Pausing only to examine a blister on my heel, I climbed the hill toward that beckoning smoke-puff. If it was a farm, they would have water of sorts; if it was a still, I would take a drink of "white lightning," and nothing else would matter after that!

Rounding a turn in the snake-like road, I came upon a typical mountain cabin, like any of a score of others I had stopped at this morning. Bright red peppers were hanging in strings from the rafters of a low front stoop, built onto the front of a slab-pine shack. There was the usual gourd-pole standing, gaunt and skeletal, in the yard. Martins darted in and out of the hanging gourd bird-houses, those professional hawk-warners for the chickens that clucked and scratched about the yard. Then, bubbling up clear and sweet as the one Moses struck from a rock, I saw a mountain spring just beyond the house. A gourd-dipper hung beside it, and a large watermelon lay chilling in its depths beside two brown crocks of milk or butter. With a faint moan I headed for this oasis—

And stopped short.

A tall, spare mountaineer with a bushy red beard and a missing right arm had appeared, as though the rocky ground had sprouted him. His narrow blue eyes held an expression almost identical to the look of the rifle bore he held cradled in his left arm. It was pointed directly at my heart, which was pounding against my ribs like a trapped rabbit.

But I managed to smile. "Good morning, sir. I'm here to take the census. . . . Are you the head of the house?"

The blue eyes narrowed a fraction. Their owner spat. I heard the click of a cocked rifle as he frowned, as though puzzled at the word "census"; then, in a deep rusty drawl:

"You ain't takin' nothin' around here, Ma'm. *Git!* Besides," he added with simple dignity, "we ain't got nary'ne. We're pore folks. . . ."

I stifled a giggle, managing to keep my face straight with an effort—in spite of that deadly-looking weapon leveled at my chest.

"No, no. I mean. . . . The Government sent me to. . . ."

At the word, my unwilling host stiffened a bit more. His cold eyes flicked a look at my official folder, and he snorted.

"We don't want no re-lief!" he snapped. "Them as can't do for theirselves—like them shif'less Hambys down the road!—you give *them* your re-lief! Me and Marthy can keep keer of one 'nother!"

A GRIN of admiration crept over my face at sight of this one-armed, undernourished old hellion, standing here on his little piece of unfertile land and defying the whole world to help or hinder him. This, I thought, is our American heritage. Pioneers like these hill people had made our nation what it is today. But some of them, like this old farmer, were still pioneering, still fighting to carve a living out of wilderness and weather. He didn't think of himself as a "citizen," didn't trade on it, and had probably never voted or paid taxes in his life. But he was an American, all right!

"Look," I said gently. "All I'm supposed to do is take your name, and the names of all your family. For the files in Washington. They have to know how many people there are in the country. Every ten years, we. . . ."

The old codger—I couldn't decide how old he was; perhaps fifty, perhaps sixty—just looked at me.

"How-come?" he asked simply. "How-come they want to know about *us?* Me and Marthy don't bother nobody. Don't ask favors. Don't aim fer nobody to push us around. We jest want to be let alone. Was anybody down in the bed, I reckon we'd holp 'em. Rest o' the time—*leave us be!*"

I gulped, telling myself that here, again, was a typical American. It was obvious that my "basic questions" would be roundly resented by this two-fisted individualist, and certainly not answered unless I resorted to a sneak-approach.

I shrugged, and laid my folder down on a sawed-off stump.

"All right, Mr. . . . er? I didn't catch the name?"

"I don't aim to drop it," the old hellion answered dryly, but a twinkle of humor came into those rifle-eyes of his. The muzzle of his weapon lowered only a fraction. He jerked his thumb toward the spring. "You dry? Git ye a drink, if you're a mind to. Then," he added politely but firmly, "I reckon you'll be on your way? Got a tin lizzie someplace?"

"Parked down at Stoots General Store. I had to walk the rest of the way," I let my voice fall an octave, forlornly, hoping to play on his sympathy. After all, he was a citizen, and I was being paid, not to hike up and down these mountains, but to list the people living on them. "Think your . . . er, wife? . . . would mind if I sat down on that cool-looking porch for a minute and caught my breath? Folks who live in town," I added, grinning at him and trying flattery, "live from side to side. Not up and down, like you-all around these parts! I wouldn't last a week!"

That drew a chuckle from him. But the rifle was still pointed in my general direction. Then I saw him stiffen, looking past my shoulder at someone. He frowned; shook his head slightly. But I turned too quickly—in time to see a frail, quiet-looking, little woman with graying hair and soft luminous dark eyes peeking out at me from the cabin doorway. She started to duck back out of sight, in obedience to the man's headshake. Then she seemed to think better of it, and stepped out into full view. There was a kind of glow about her face, a warm happy look, that drew me at once.

"Why, Jared!" she scolded in a mild sweet drawl. "Didn' you ast the lady to come in and set? *Shame* on you!" She winked at me cheerfully, a woman's wink, sharing the eccentricities of menfolk as our mutual cross. "I reckon you're jest plumb tuckered out, ain't you, ma'm? Why, come in! I'll send one o' the childurn to the sprang to fetch ye a cold drink o' buttermilk. Don't nothin' cool me off like buttermilk, of a hot day!" she chattered on hospitably, then raised her voice. *"Tommee! Cleavydel!* . . . Now, where'd them young'uns git off to? Berry-pickin', I'll be bound! . . . *Raynell! Woodrow!"* she shouted again, then gave up, shaking her head and smiling.

I hesitated, glancing back at the man with the rifle . . . and caught a peculiar look of alarm on his bearded face. He opened his mouth once as though about to protest, then sighed, and turned away to the spring.

"I'll fetch the buttermilk," he offered gruffly. "I . . . I reckon Marthy would like a mite o' company now and then, at that. Man-person don't take no stock in visitin'!"

"Well," I hesitated, as he strode out of earshot. "I'm not exactly here for a visit—" I eyed the little woman, whose bright eyes instantly took on a look of sensitive withdrawal.

"Oh—! You . . . you ain't from County Welfare?" she faltered. "Jared, he's sot agin any kind of charity. Even the soldier kind. He lost that—'ere arm of his'n in the German war. Come back here to his pa's place and found it growed up in weeds, all his folks died off. Typhoid. I . . . I . . ." She flushed, and lowered her eyes. "I was only a girl-baby when I first seen him, a-huntin' rabbits with that one arm. Took a shine to one another first sight, and I run off from my daddy to marry him. . . ."

She stopped, as if shocked at the flood of pent-up conversation that burst from her at sight of another woman. From what the old man had said, I sensed that she did not have the pleasure of much company, up here off the beaten trail. Church-going was about the only recreation most of these mountain women had, anyway; and there was something withdrawn about this household. I had sensed it before, though there was nothing I could put my finger on and call it "unusual." This middle-aged

couple seemed a cross-section of the mountaineer families I had encountered today and yesterday, on my census-taking trek over the district assigned me. All were poor. All were suspicious, more or less, of the personal questions I had to ask. All had large families of children.

I SAT down on the porch and opened my folder, smiling. "No, no," I answered her question. "The Government makes a . . . a list of all the folks living in this country, and I'm here to ask you a few questions. About your family and your farm. . . . Your name is—?" I waited, pencil poised.

The little gray woman's face cleared. "Oh!" She beamed. "I . . . I catch on now to what you. . . .! Our oldest boy told me about it, just yesterday. Said a lady was over to Baldy Gap, askin' questions for the Gover'mint. Likely 't'was you, yourself?" I nodded, beaming back at her. "Well, then!" she said eagerly. "I'll be happy and glad to answer ye. Jared," she lowered her voice apologetically, "he's a mite ill at strangers. Don't you take hurt by nothin' he says!"

I sat back in the split-bottom rocker, thankful to get the business over with so smoothly. Their name, I learned, was Forney. Jared C. The "C!" was just an initial; it didn't stand for anything. Jared's mother had simply thought it sounded well. Martha Ann was her name, aged forty-eight to her husband's sixty-seven. They had, she said brightly, eleven children. Woodrow was the oldest. The youngest, a baby in arms, was not yet named. He was simply called "the least one."

Smiling, I jotted down the names in my book, then asked Martha Forney to supply their birth dates. Rocking gently, she ticked them off with the fond memory of any mother. I stopped, frowning slightly at one apparent error in my figures. . . .

"Oh—I'm *sorry!* I must have got the names mixed." I laughed gaily. "I have the birthday of your youngest child listed as *second!* 1934. . . ."

Martha Forney turned toward me, her great luminous eyes glowing with matter-of-fact pride at having mothered this large brood.

"May 10th . . . 1934?" she corroborated the figures I had set down, then nodded happily. "Yes, that's right. That's when the least'ne come to us. Woodrow, he was the first. I reckon on account of Jared's arm and us needing a half-growed boy to help us around the place. But then," she burst out shyly, "I . . . I got to honin' for a *little* 'ne. One I could hold in my arms. . . . And the next mornin', why, there he was! Nestled down in the bed on my side, a-kickin' the covers and cooin' like a turtle-dove. . . .!"

My jaws dropped. I blinked, peering at my cheery-voiced hostess with a look of shock. Then, I jumped. Jared Forney was looming over me, with a crock of buttermilk held in the crook of his one arm. His bearded face was like a thundercloud of anger, with flashes of lethal lightning darting from those cold blue eyes.

With an ominous thump he set down the crock and towered above me, single fist clenched as though he seriously debated smashing it into my startled face.

"Marthy!" he snapped. "Git on into the house! . . . And you," he glared at me. "You jest *git!* You got no call to come sneakin' around our place, a-progin' into things that don't consarn you . . . and a-pokin' fun at them that's afflicted!"

Afflicted? I glanced at that stump of an arm, wondering if that was what he referred to. But the gentle, protective look he threw after his wife's meekly retreating figure made me wonder. Then suddenly I remembered those weirdly garbled figures on my census sheet, and thought I understood.

"Oh, I . . . I'm terribly sorry," I murmured. "I . . . just didn't understand. She . . . she was telling me about the children, their names, and when they were born. . . ."

"We got no young'nes," the old man cut me off, very quietly. "You mustn't mind Marthy. She's . . . not right in her head. And you oughtn't to been pesterin' her, upsettin' her with all them questions. . . .!" he fired at me fiercely. "Ma'm

if there's anything important you want to ask, ask me! And then, I'll thank ye to git off'n my property and back where you belong!"

"Yes. Yes, of course," I nodded humbly, and managed to stammer out the last few questions about crops, acreage, and the rest, which the old fellow answered in a flat gruff voice. I scribbled down the information hurriedly, and was about to get to hell out of there, when I happened to glance back at the cabin door.

THE little gray-haired woman was standing just inside, half in shadow, half in clear mountain sunlight that slanted through the pines overhead. Her arms cuddled a wad of clothing close to her breast, and as she bent over it, crooning, I thought I saw a baby's small chubby hand wave from the folds of the cloth, playfully patting at her cheek.

I whirled to face the old man, frowning. "I thought you had no children," I called his hand rather coolly; then decided that their offspring must be illegitimate, to account for his queer attitude. My face softened. "Everybody," I said kindly, "is entitled to his status as a citizen of this country, Mr. Forney. Your baby is, too. He's entitled to free education, the right to vote when he's twenty-one, the right to apply to certain benefits. . . ."

My words broke off, like glass. Jared Forney was staring at me as if I had taken leave of my senses. His blue eyes darted toward his wife, then back to me with a shocked, amazed expression I shall never forget.

"You . . . you *see* it?" he whispered sharply. "You see ary *baby* . . . ?"

I gaped at him, then glanced back at the woman, at the cooing child in her arms. A soft rounded little cheek peeped out from the folds of the old dress, which she held lightly in her embrace, rocking it. I saw a tendril of curly blond hair, a flash of big innocent baby-eyes. I turned back to Jared Forney, deciding that he, and not his quiet gentle little wife, was the mental case. Anyone could mix the birth dates of eleven children, especially a vague, unlettered mountain woman like Mrs. Forney.

"See it?" I echoed, puzzled. "See what, the baby? Of course I do! You weren't trying to hide it? Surely," I said softly, "you are not ashamed of a sweet little cherub like that? . . . And I've got to take his name and birth date," I added firmly. "That's the law, Mr. Forney. You could be fined and put in jail for withholding information from a census-taker."

The mild threat went right over his head. Jared Forney continued to stare at me, then back at his wife. He shook his head, muttering, then sat down weakly in a chair, mopping his forehead with a great red bandana, pulled from his overall pocket.

"Well, I swannee!" he whispered in a shaken voice. "Well, the Lord holp my time! Well . . . I . . . *swannee!"*

I frowned at him impatiently, pencil raised. "Please, Mr. Forney," I pursued the advantage I seemed to have gained, for some reason I could not fathom. "If you have other children, you must tell me their names—or let your wife tell me. It doesn't matter . . . er . . . whether they are legally yours. . . ." I began.

He jerked up his head, glaring at me. "Don't you say nothin' like that about Marthy!" he cut me short. "There ain't a finer, better woman in these hills than my old 'oman! Even if . . . even if she is a mite. . . ." He gulped, casting another wary glance at the quiet figure with that baby in her arms. Then, swallowing twice, he called uncertainly: "W-woodrow? where are ye at, son? Cleavydel? Tom? Raynell. . . .?"

INSTANTLY, at his call, a group of children appeared from the shadowy pine coppice at our left. Sunlight, slanting golden through the quill-like leaves, made my eyes burn and smart, so that I could not see their faces clearly. But as they moved forward, in a smiling group, I made out the features of two young girls in their teens, a small boy of perhaps eleven, and a tall youth in his early twenties. They were all strong, healthy-looking children,

in spite of a pronounced pallor that was unusual among these sun-tanned mountaineers. They were dressed in neat flour-sack shifts, or cut-down overalls, obviously having belonged to their father. All four were bare-footed, and swinging lard-cans brimful of blackberries. I remember thinking it odd at the time that none of their faces and hands were stained with the dark purple juice . . . but perhaps they had removed these berry stains at the spring on their way to the cabin. What struck me as especially odd was their coloring.

The two girls were completely unalike, and would never have been taken for sisters. One was sturdy and dark, the other slim and blonde. The boys were as unlike each other as they were unlike the girls. One, the younger, had a pronounced Eurasian cast to his features, with small black slanted eyes in a mongoloid face. The older was a redhead, lanky, freckled, and grinning. All of them seemed in high spirits, with a glow of such pure happiness in each face that I could not help glowing back at them.

"What a fine bunch of kids!" I commented to Mrs. Forney, with a faint look of reproach for her dour spouse.

Jared Forney gaped at me again, his face paling. He followed my gaze, squinting and shading his eyes against the sun, then shook his head.

"I *swannee!*" he gulped. "I . . . I . . . Ain't nobody but her ever really seen. . . ."

He broke off again, mopping his forehead once more and glancing sheepishly back at his wife.

"Well," I said briskly, "I'm sorry, but I've got to be getting along." I turned back to Mrs. Forney again, to ask pleasantly, "Do you have the children's birthdays listed in your family Bible? If you could get it for me, let me copy them. . . ."

Martha Forney glanced past me at her husband, a mild look of accusation.

"I . . . did have 'em wrote down," she said gently. "Hit was a peddler come by here, and I ast him if he'd write 'em for me. I never learned to read or write. . . ." She confessed timidly. "But I had all the dates in my head, and he wrote down what I told him. Then Jared," again she glanced at the hunched muttering figure, "he seen 'em and tore out the page. Said hit was a sin and a 'bomination to the Lord to write a lie in His Book. . . . But it was Him sent 'em! Every one! I . . . I know I never *birthed* ary one of 'em my own self, not like other women have kids. But . . . I . . ." She floundered, a vague bewildered look coming into her face as though she puzzled over an old familiar problem, still unsolved to her satisfaction. "I'm their maw. . . ."

Then, suddenly, she turned to me. Those luminous dark eyes, alight with an innocent happiness and devotion, seemed to blot out the poverty and squalor of that small mountain farm, bathing it in a soft golden glow like the sunlight sifting through the trees overhead.

"Ma'm," she said abruptly, in a quiet voice like the murmur of a mountain brook, "Ma'm . . . *You* love kids, too, don't ye? You got ary young'nes of your own?"

I SAID I had a little boy, aged six, whom I loved dearly . . . and added, politely, that I should be getting back to him before suppertime. Martha Forney nodded, beaming. She shot a look of triumph at the old man, who was still muttering under his breath.

"There, Jared!" she said happily. "You see? That's all there is to it. There's some as don't want young'nes," she added sadly. "For one reason or another, they don't *want* to bring a baby into the world. There's some as destroy. . . . But once they've started, once they've come just so far towards bein' borned, they *can't* go back—poor mites! All they ever want is . . . just to be wanted and loved, and mebbe needed, like Woodrow. Why, there must be thousands," she said softly, "a-pushin' and crowdin' *outside* some place, in hopes somebody'll let 'em come on ahead and be somebody's young'ne. Now, Woodrow, I reckon he waited for years out there, wherever it is they have to wait. He was a real big boy when I . . . I wanted a son. And," she sighed, happily, "that very evening, I heard somebody choppin' firewood out back o' the cabin. Thought it was Jared

. . . but he was off a-huntin' possum! When he come back and found all that stovewood, he thought *I* done it—or some neighbor who was wantin' to shame him for leavin' me alone, without ary man-person to do for me. But . . . it was Woodrow! Jared, he ain't never been able to *see* his boy a-holpin' him around the place—just sees what he *does*. He's learned," the little old woman chuckled, "to tell him and then go off some place. When he gits back, the chores is done. Woodrow," she spoke proudly with a note of deep fondness, "he's a right handy boy around a farm. Ain't hardly nothin' he can't turn his hand to! . . . and," her eyes saddened, "why there was somebody onct that didn't want a son like *him*, I jest can't understand!"

I had sat in wordless amazement, listening to all this. Now it was my turn to gape at Jared Forney, wracking my brain to figure out which of these two old mountain people was the insane one . . . or whether *I* was! Out of sheer desire to get my feet on solid earth again, I scribbled some figures on my census sheet, cleared my throat, and asked little Mrs. Forney point-blank:

"And . . . the baby's birthday? He's about . . . eight months old, isn't he? Some . . . er . . . some neighbor left them on your doorstep? They're foster-children, is that it?"

"No ma'm," Martha Forney said clearly. "They're *mine!* I . . . I caused 'em to git borned, jest by wishin' . . . and lovin'. Like an old hen settin' on another hen's eggs!" she chuckled with a matter-of-fact humor that made my scalp stir. "Of course they ain't . . . ain't *regular* young'nes. Jared, now, he ain't never seen 'em . . . exceptin' once when he was lickered up," she said in a tone of mild reproof for past sins. "Fell in a ditch full o' rain water, and liked to drownded! Hit was Cleavydel holped him out . . . and he was that ashamed before his own daughter, he never has drunk another jugful! Oh! mebbe a nip now and then," she added with a tender tolerant grimace at her errant spouse. "But not, you know, *drinkin'*. Them kids has been the makin' of Jared," she said complacently. "Time was he'd beat me and go off to town for a week or more," she confided. "But now he knows the young'nes is lookin' up to him . . . even if *he* can't see *them!* . . . and he's as good a man as you'd find in these hills!"

I almost snickered, noting the sheepish, subdued, and even proud look on the old man's face. Here, indeed, was a fine and loving father. . . . But I still could not understand the origin of that smiling group of children before me, and of the baby in the woman's arms—the baby she said was born before those other three half-grown children!

"Er. . . ." I tried again, helplessly. "Mrs. Forney. . . . You mean they're adopted? I mean, not legally adopted, but. . . . You say they were given to you by somebody who 'didn't want them,' as you call it? I . . . I'm afraid I don't quite. . . ."

"They wasn't give to me," Martha Forney interrupted stoutly, with a fond smile from the baby to the group near the pine coppice. "I *taken* 'em! They was supposed to be born to some other woman, every last one of 'em! Some woman who didn't want 'em to be born. . . . But *I* did! You can do anything, if you're a mind to . . . and the Lord thinks it's right. So," she finished matter-of-factly, "Jared and me have got eleven young'nes. Nary one of 'em looks like us, except Woodrow's a redhead like Jared. But that's accidental, o'course. They look like their *real* ma and pa. . . . *John Henry!*" she raised her voice abruptly. "Where are you, son? . . . John Henry," she explained to me in a half-whisper, "he's kind of timid. *Ressie May!*" she called again, then sighed: "Folks can think up more reasons for not wantin' young'nes, seems like!"

I RUBBED my eyes, staring at the group of children beside the cabin, waiting in a silent, good-humored group for whatever fond command their parents might issue next. As I looked, two more dim figures—for they all seemed dim, all at once, like figures in an old snapshot, faded by time—joined the others. One, a thin sad-eyed boy of seven, with a markedly

Jewish cast to his features, smiled at me and ducked his head shyly, playing with a flower in his hand—a mountain daisy that, oddly enough, looked clumsy and solid in the misty fingers that held it. The second new figure—I started—was a little Negro girl. She giggled silently as my gaze fell on her, digging one bare black toe into the dust. On her face, too, was that blissful glow of complete happiness and security from all hurt.

"Ressie May's colored," Mrs. Forney whispered. "But she don't know it! To me, she's jest like all the rest o' my young'nes. . . ."

Suddenly Jared Forney leaped to his feet, glowering down at me.

"I ain't gonna have no more of this!" he thundered nervously. "They . . . they ain't there, and you both know it! You don't see nary young'ne, and neither does Marthy! I tell her over and over, it's all in her mind —from wantin' a passel o' kids we never could have! She's . . . sickly, Marthy is. She . . . Her paw alluz allowed she was a wood's-colt, her ownself, and he tuck it out in beatin' her till she run off from him! All that's mixed up in her head, and now . . . well, she's a mite teched, as folks around here know. Her with her make-like young'nes named Woodrow, and Cleavydel, and . . . and some of 'em not even of our faith or color! I . . . I don't know where she gits all them berries she says the children pick, or how she does all them chores behindst my back—that she makes out like Woodrow done! But . . . if it made her any happier," he lowered his voice, speaking fiercely for my ears only, "I'd pretend the Devil was takin' the night with us!"

MY EYES misted, and I was about to nod in complete sympathy. But he wasn't having any. To this hard-bitten old rascal, I was against him, like the rest of the world, just another menace to his wife's peace of mind.

"And now," he snarled, "you *git!* You got no call to set there, makin' a mock of them as cain't help theirselves. And laughin', makin' out like you see them young'nes same as she. . . !"

"But . . . but I *do* see. . . !"

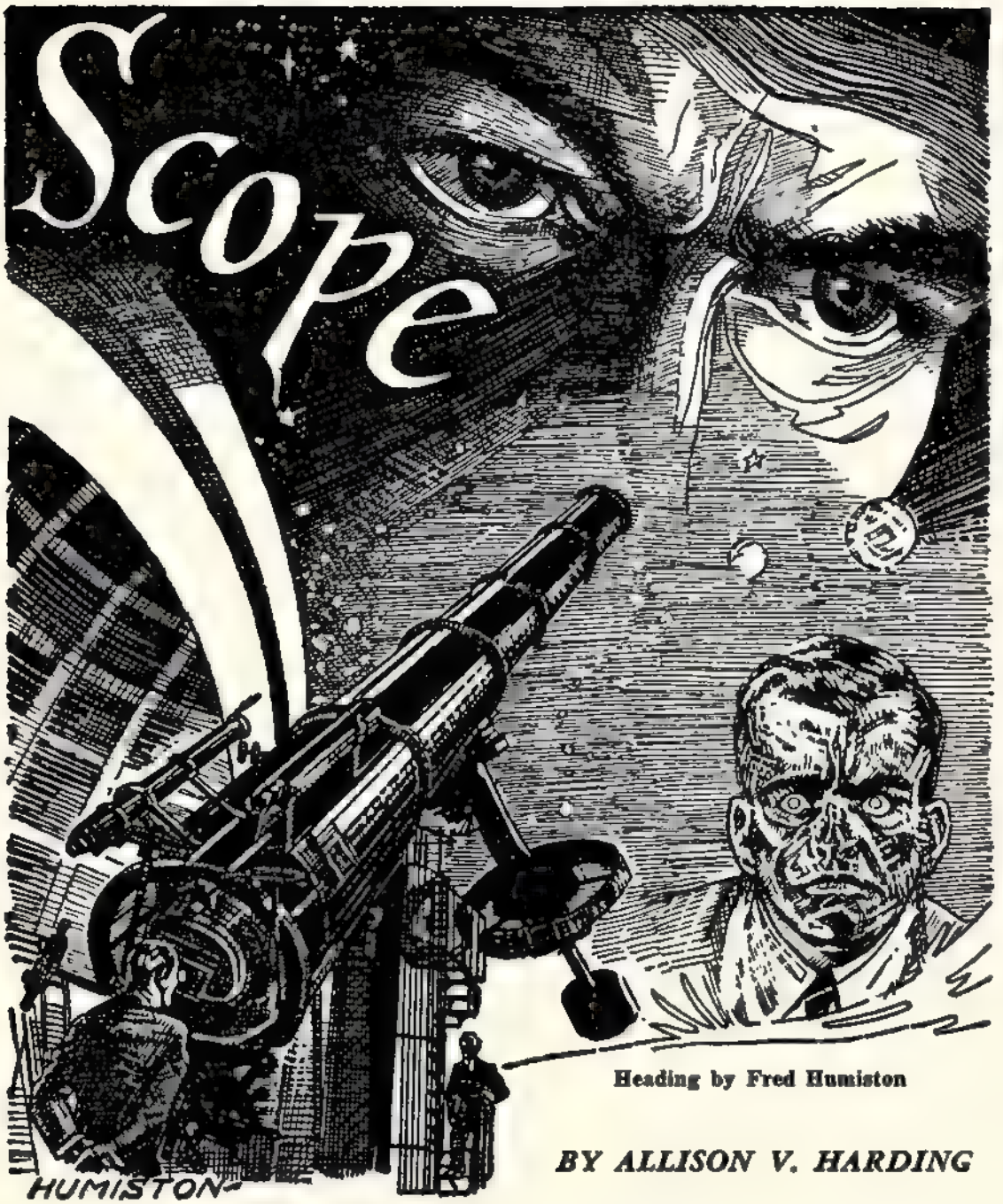
I broke off hastily. Jared Forney's rifle had appeared again as if by magic, cradled in that good arm of his . . . and pointed unwaveringly at my forehead. His left eye sighted along the barrel, drawing a bead on a spot just between my startled eyes . . . and I didn't stop to protest any longer. There was cold-blooded murder in that squinting blue eye, and a fierce proud protectiveness for that vague little wife of his that brooked no argument.

I turned and ran, hugging my census-folder under my arm and not stopping to pick up a pencil that bounced from behind my ear. I ran, praying. Then I heard the click of a cocked rifle and just ran.

Only once did I so much as glance back over my shoulder at the humble little mountain cabin. When I did . . . well, it was only a bundle of old clothes that crooning woman was cuddling in her empty arms. There were four lard-buckets brimful of blackberries *someone* had picked and set down just beyond the pine coppice. But the group of smiling, ill-assorted children had disappeared.

For me, that is, they had disappeared—perhaps because . . . I don't know. Because I didn't care enough, and it took that to make them live and to keep them alive. Perhaps it was only my devotion to my own little boy that made me see them at all, as Jared Forney's childless wife saw them. Rather sadly, I took out my census sheet, a few yards down the road, and scratched out the names of eleven children that no one—no one but Martha Forney—had wanted to live. Uncle Sam, I realized with a wry smile, might take a dim view of statistics such as those. Dream-children. Wish-children, born only of will and need . . . and love. The unwanted. The unborn. . . .

But for little old Mrs. Forney, their "mother" with the heart as big as all outdoors, I am quite certain that they are very much alive. And the Bureau of Vital Statistics could be wrong!



Heading by Fred Humiston

BY ALLISON V. HARDING

THIS is the observatory atop Cruick's Mountain. We are the highest point for many miles around. Were I speaking instead of writing, I am sure that "We" would stick in my throat. But force of habit is an extraordinary thing.

I have always liked upper New England, and Danover is New England at its pleasantest. Below me, below Cruick's Mountain

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That most provocative of all questions. . . .
By what process was the universe formed?

and the other surrounding hills, the picturesque little college of Danover rests comfortably in the palm of the valley. From up here, (as Professor Merrick used to remark) the stone and brick buildings are toy. Now the whole miniature scene is as though sprinkled by a giant teaspoon of sugar. It is the January snow—time for skis and skates and bobsledding.

I, myself, have many times dared the slope on the far side of Cruick's. Brewster occasionally went with me, but he was endowed with a less robust constitution than I and would return to the dormitories before long, chattering with cold. The downhill this side falls away sharply into the valley and is too abrupt and treacherous for sport. Even the little footpath that tries to tame the steepness by winding circuitously down the slope is not easy to negotiate.

IN RECENT years as a post-graduate I never planned to go out on that slope with Brewster without receiving Professor Merrick's good-natured tut-tut.

"I need you and Ethan, John," he would say to me, his bright eyes twinkling because he knew he would lose the argument. "We're coming to the most important part, and plaster casts and broken limbs have a way of cluttering up any laboratory!"

Professor Merrick was the only astronomer I ever knew who referred to his observatory as a laboratory. Brewster and I, of course, always survived our ski runs, and after cocktails or hot buttered rum down at the Faculty Club, would wend our way back up Cruick's Mountain. In these last months we have been sleeping atop Cruick's with Angus Merrick.

I must tell you of the wind. Wind is an important part of New England; its character and fancies change with the seasons. The wind is soft and strong, gentle and rough. Up here at the top of the world it is never totally absent—and in that sly way of New England winds, it seems to find ways to come indoors despite shut windows and secured portals.

I thought of the vagaries of the wind before this night and I think of them again now as I write in our record room below the observatory proper. The single bulb above my head pushes the darkness into the outer corners of the large chamber. Feeble light glints against the darkwood with which the room is finished, and on the rough, bare rafters overhead. You see, it was the wish both of the University Council and Professor Merick that all of the money coming from the Cruick's estate should go directly into the telescope and scientific equipment, rather than into elaborate quarters for the staff.

When I first came upon *him* earlier—and the terror of that moment is still thankfully cushioned by the numbness of my mind—Ethan Brewster still moved. Slightly, perhaps, but he did move. Gently, gently, like the dying pendulum of a run-down clock. Here behind locked doors. That was what put the totally irrelevant and trivial thought of the wind into my mind even as my eyes and comprehension gaped at the useless sack-like thing defying man's laws by *hanging* in mid-air of the dark-shadowed room. All this, of course, a fractional second before I saw that this black suspended thing was not just a sack, before I saw the rope holding it from the rafter. But as I say, it must have been the wind, or the *thing's* strong remembrance of life which, like with a child's swing, continues motion after the child has left his play.

Professor Merrick? Merrick went off into the night; I could not stop him. Let's see, it's near three a.m. now—that was a couple of hours ago. I searched, running and screaming his name through the stinging sleet that lashed at our mountain. They may find him—I don't know. You see, Merrick had *changed*, too. Some deep buried instinct may take him down the treacherous slope into the valley. He may fall outside in the snow, but it won't make any difference.

Brewster was the first to go. You'll remember though—there were three of us. I shall be the last.

DANOVER COLLEGE was one of those New England institutions of learning which considers smallness a virtue. Its tradition had grown richly like the ivy on its walls. Here arrived the sons of men who

themselves had known and loved the pine-paneled study halls, the dorms and libraries, cherished it and remembered it as they went out into the world, still able to call each of their fellow classmates by first name.

It was one of those twists of fortune that Joseph W. Cruick, the railroad tycoon, had come to Danover to live out his days. In typical manner, the hard-minded multi-millionaire had bought the mountain which was later to bear his name, and surrounded by the accoutrements of his wealth, he had become something of a legend in the region. An irreverent trustee, it was rumored, had suggested once behind closed doors that perhaps Cruick on his hill had been softened and mellowed by his closeness to God; that perhaps as the seasons came and went—the distinct and wonderful seasons of upper New England, the sharp snows, the soft, hissing rains, the greenness and then the crescendo of autumn colors and equinox—Cruick came to looking down with growing peace and some pleasure from his height into the valley where Danover College stood in neat design.

Whatever prompted his unexpected actions, the facts were these. One day, unannounced, he turned up at the president's residence. It was then that the circumstances of his life became important to Danover. He was wifeless, childless, without a close relative. And he had been thinking he would like to leave a bequest; in fact, the substance of his fortune. Did the College . . . would they suggest a worthy outlet?

At that time the brilliant Professor Angus Merrick, internationally known astronomer whose name has been linked with Hooker and Hall, with Mount Wilson and with Palomar, had just joined the faculty. Danover now had the outstanding nuclear physicist in the world and lacked only a terrestrial observatory to utilize his gifts.

It was settled in a few short months. The Mountain and his residence would be turned over by Cruick to the college and the funds made available to build the world's finest observatory and biggest telescope. It would quite dwarf the 200-inch Hailscope used at Palomar. The residue of his estate would be for the appointment and maintenance of a small staff whose chief, of course, would be Angus Merrick.

THE several years after Joseph W. Cruick's death, with the subsequent administering of his bequest, were memorable ones for Danover. Newspaper and newsreel audiences first heard of the project with reports of a strange procession led by the twenty-eight wheel trailer trucks and its precious cargo, the giant glass disk weighing 18½ tons. But the process of grinding and polishing such a disk and the construction of such a complex mechanism as the world's largest telescope, a highly technical and laborious task, had started long before. The job goes on through months and years —almost without notice most of the time— while those directly concerned are energized to great efforts by the intriguing promise of being able to see farther into the Universe than man has ever been able to see before. From the day of the earliest and smallest telescope, scientists have been concerned with the fundamental problem of astronomy and astronomers, that most provocative of all questions: By what process was the Universe formed?

There were nights in the little observatory—gay, excited nights over hot mugs of coffee—when we three, Professor Merrick, Brewster, and myself, John Douglas, would speculate on the adventures ahead of us. It hardly needs to be recorded that I look back on those innocent imaginings now with a certain fatalistic envy.

The considerably publicized fact that Danover now had the world's largest telescope naturally centered a considerable amount of attention upon the small New England college. But Angus Merrick was not impressed by publicity.

"I shall leave the conclaves, the dinners and endless conferences to those who enjoy them. For me—I have my telescope."

Without us for companionship, Merrick would certainly have fitted the role of hermit. He mixed little with other faculty members, preferring instead to keep to himself. When he was not examining or adjusting the vast and intricate mechanisms of the new scope itself, he was poring over

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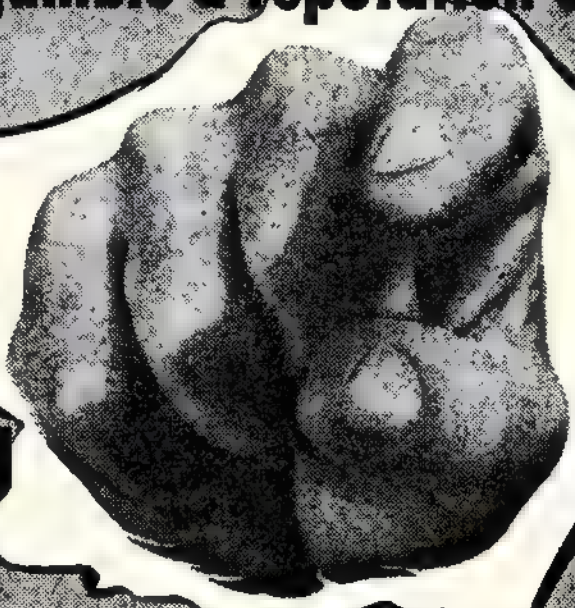

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some problem of astronomical portent to be considered and solved, or was working in the observatory basement laboratory on one of his innumerable projects.

With a wry smile and a shake of his thin-featured head, the Professor often complained that he resented even the time needed for eating and sleeping. Those moments away from his telescope, away from his scientific equations and his astronomical data were begrudged.

"You, John, and you, Ethan—you still have time and the inclination to court enjoyment of the senses." (We knew what was coming. Merrick had said it long ago at the beginnings of our triumvirate.) "A hearty meal, a good liqueur, a pretty girl—these are the things that mean so much to the young. But when one reaches my stage of life, the moments left—because they are ever fewer—become so much more precious. The young may have many enthusiasms; the old should have but one."

For Ethan and for me there had been the usual undergraduate sports and escapades—the latter particularly for myself, I should add. The proms and dances, sleigh rides in the snow with girls whose faces were legion, indistinguishable except that all were young, all were pretty as the young are. But gradually as we'd gone further along in our post-college work, as we came to know Merrick, some of the scientific detachment of the man, some of his unconcern over the mundane and the prosaic, and greater concern over the cosmic—some of these attitudes had attached themselves to us.

As I said, there had been girls, and then one girl for each of us. Then came justifying remarks like, "Well, no woman wants to marry a scientist;" a few regretful backward looks, occasional memories that occurred when the undergraduates in the valley below came and went, doing things we had once done. But then at last, for Ethan and me, like Angus Merrick, there was confirmed bachelorhood. We were wedded to our telescope.

It was, of course, Professor Merrick's "invention" that did it. The man's one flaw, if it could be called that, was a certain secretiveness. The trait probably grew out of the very intensity of his scientific fervor. Nothing which could not absolutely be proved and reproved was so. He was not a boaster; in fact, on occasions that his name would be mentioned in scientific treatise—as happened more than once—with references to the fact that he was one of the world's leading astronomical experts, Merrick was positively gruff with embarrassment. It was typical, therefore, that he worked on the lens project for those first three years by himself.

Brewster and I knew nothing but that the Professor spent most of his nights down in the basement workshop. Among other things, our laboratory was outfitted for optical work. We might have guessed what was going on but actually did not until that evening three years after the scope, in all its mightiness, had been assembled.

I REMEMBER every detail of that important night well. Brewster, who now did much of our cooking, had prepared an omelet for supper. If Professor Merrick's thin frame and equally dainty appetite ever displayed characteristics of the epicure, it was when faced with omelet. This one Brewster has worked hard over. It was good. But Angus Merrick had barely sat down at the table when he shot up from his chair as though propelled by springs. I looked at him with exaggerated disapproval and make a mock remark about how hard our "chef" had worked to please him and now he wouldn't even sit down long enough to sample the dish. Merrick hesitated, and with a visible effort again seated himself, helped himself to a small portion of the omelet and worried it absently with his fork. Ethan and I exchanged amused glances. It was obvious to both of us that the good Professor's mind was on something other than food.

Finally Merrick could contain himself no longer, but with a mumbled and embarrassed excuse to Brewster, fled from the table and clattered down the basement stairs into the laboratory.

We looked at each other, and Brewster said, "What's he up to?" I shook my head.

I recall we ourselves did justice to the omelet and then sat reading in the great room, both of us grimly determined to wait Angus Merrick out, challenge him when he emerged from the laboratory and ask him what he was up to.

The Professor reappeared at two-thirty a. m. I had dozed over the *"Astronomy Quarterly,"* but the excited voices awoke me.

"Ethan, I've got it! You boys come down and look!" He still referred to us as his "boys" though we were both well past the middle thirties.

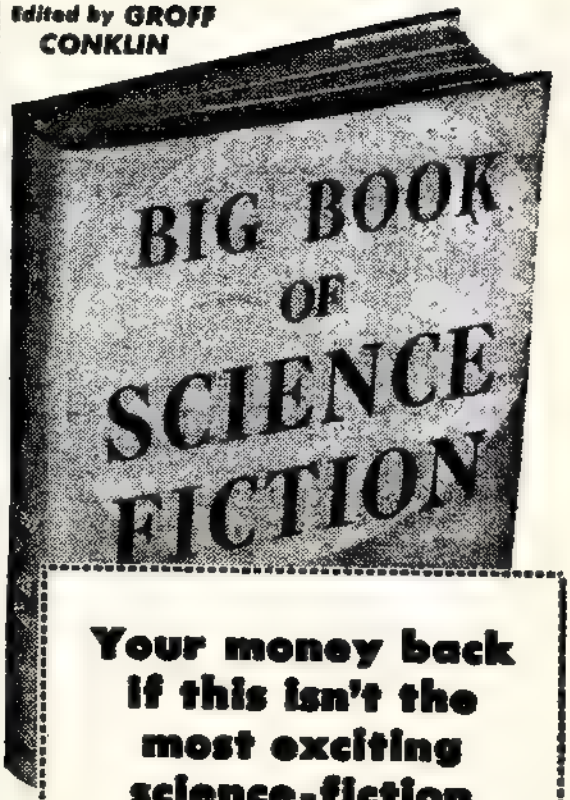
I WAS fully awake in a second more and followed the other two downstairs. I have said before, I think, that I am the "lightweight" scientifically of our triumvirate. What Merrick exhibited was quite beyond me—I can only report what I saw. It was a lens, to be sure, a large one carefully placed on horses and held in place by bracketing, but it was of a peculiar and irregular shape, its prisms and angles most complicated and eccentric. Merrick immediately launched into an involved mathematical explanation to Brewster who inclined his head. Even Ethan, though, with his considerable knowledge of practical and theoretical physics seemed perplexed.

Reduced to simplest terms the element about the lens that I did grasp was this. Its outré and eccentric shape allowed for a revolutionary process of bending and utilizing sight waves and images, adding a fabulous potential to what was already the world's largest telescope.

In looking back now I wonder if Merrick had some premonition. At the time, we ascribed the fact that he refused to have any outside help in hauling the lens up to the telescope proper to his mania for secrecy. I might add that this task of installation had been tremendous, and I had endeared myself to the other two with my unscientific strength without which the huge, ungainly, homemade lens would never have been got into place.

Merrick had for some time been working on a sub-socket to fit in the telescope base. We had wondered, but he had dismissed

Edited by GROFF CONKLIN



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our questions with glib talk about using it as a "recess for photo equipment." Now we saw the socket's true purpose. It was of imposing metal cagework—manufactured elsewhere—and fitted in such a way as to allow whatever was to be superimposed within it to rest securely. The whole could then be locked securely into place with a rude but effective mechanism which to my eye somewhat resembled that used in the dogging of sea doors or compartments aboard ship.

The Professor tinkered and fussed over the instrument as with a first-born. He was without sleep and virtually without food for those days where he was worrying and puttering the mechanism into place. And if he cautioned us once, he cautioned us twenty times not to say a word of the new lens attachment to anyone.

We both agreed, of course, but I could see that Merrick's warning only added to Brewster's impatience. Ethan's usually pallid face had more color in it than I'd seen since the day the construction detail had finished the placing of the telescope and we were ready for our first peek. And now the Professor's elaborate concern about secrecy merely heightened the tension.

ANGUS MERRICK was finally satisfied. It was the night of the fourth day that he gathered us together in his study in the sleeping quarters of the observatory building.

"Ethan and John," he said in a voice that was edged with excitement, "I want you both to promise me that you will not peer into the scope until all factors are figured out."

Without question, of course, we agreed. I should interject here the information that the astronomy class at Danover made a once-a-month sojourn up Cruick's Mountain to study the heavens for a full day. I realized immediately that Merrick had locked his own lens into place just after their last visit. Therefore we had nearly a month—a month in which time we would not be disturbed on any account.

I think it was then that I came to realize that Merrick's excitement was tinged not only with the eager anticipation of a scien-

tist, the pleasurable looking-forward to the achievement of some great purpose. That excitement was also tinged with fear.

As he gathered up together in his cozy, cheerful study for what I now recognize was to be our last long talk, he had a final word for us. It came after Brewster had asked so many questions, and I a few. Brewster was thinking, I thought, in rather outlandish, fantastic terms. I was mainly concerned with whether, if the Professor's lens was successful, we would not certainly be able to tell if life existed on the other planets.

Professor Angus Merrick stopped our chattering with a half-raised hand. There was silence for a moment as we watched him. It was as though he was seeking the right words, and then he said very simply:

"I cannot say much, Ethan and John, because if this contrivance is successful, it should prove how very *little* we know. Most of all, I want to say this in caution. If it works . . . if it works, we cannot *know*, we cannot guess *what we will see!*"

IT IS NOT so simple as just to put one's eye to a telescope and peer out into the universe. Much has to be done. Too, with his newly constructed lens attached to the already fabulously powerful scope, Professor Merrick warned us that great care would have to be used in the early stages. Looking through magnifying lenses of such fabulous power could prove highly dangerous for the individual. The light intensity, for instance, of a distant star, possibly not seeable by the naked eye, when brought into the radius of the Cruick's Mountain scope would probably blind the viewer if precautions were not observed. Fumbling hands at the mechanism that controlled the directional guide could cause the scope to swing, for instance, across the path of the sun. If the focussing were improper, the reflected energy and luminosity of that great heavenly body could easily blow up the whole observatory. Of this Merrick, Brewster, and myself were well aware.

Several days passed before Merrick decided conditions were right for our first peek. He had selected nighttime as being

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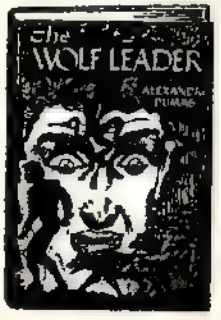

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most suitable. Brewster, as I have said, had hardly weathered the waiting period, his impatience was so great. Those last few days before our test, I must confess, I was the only one of our threesome who ate and slept with any degree of regularity. Angus Merrick referred to me, not unkindly, as "Good old Douglas, the steady member of our concern. Whatever would we do without him." It was typical, though, that I was last to look through the scope that first night.

Professor Merrick was the first to mount the platform. I can remember him now, his spare frame in the scandalously rumpled gray suit which he'd not taken off the last few days. He stood for a moment on the platform and turned to look at us standing below him watching expectantly. I remember he smiled a little and then characteristically wiped his hands nervously along his suit coat. Merrick was a nervous man; even so, he seemed more agitated and intense that I'd ever seen him before. Then he turned, wedged himself into the little chair, and with quick motions began to adjust the scope, consulting as he did, a small card with the required mathematical adjustments.

I could feel Brewster tense beside me, and I must admit that my own excitement was growing. It seemed an eternity that the Professor, seemingly turned to stone, sat there with his eye fixed to the view-piece of the scope. He turned away for a moment and fixed his gaze at the floor, looked upward quickly, stretching his neck. It is a trick astronomers have for reducing the muscular tension induced by long work at a telescope. Then he was back at the eyepiece again.

When he finally turned away, his expression was one of complete perplexity. Without a word he got up from the chair, and Brewster was quickly onto the platform within a matter of seconds. I was content to let my confrère precede me despite my own growing anticipation, for I think Ethan would not have been able to contain himself much longer. Merrick stood beside me then.

"What can you see?"

He turned his face towards me, and the puzzlement on it found words.

"I don't know, John. I'm not sure."

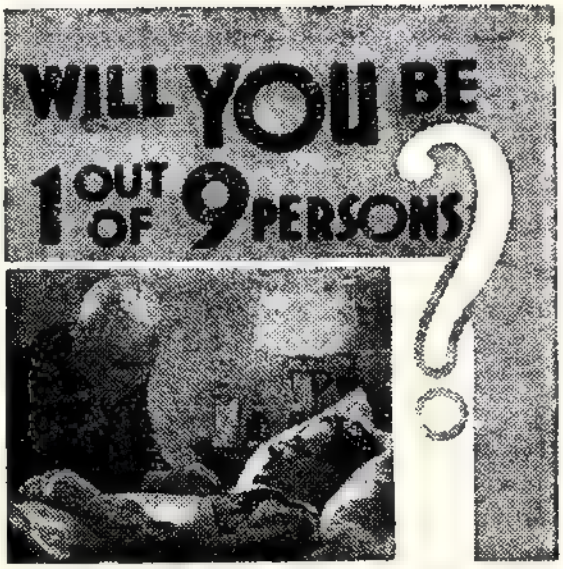
After Brewster's turn, I went to the scope. I could hear the other two talking below me on the observatory floor but I had no mind for that. I hunched into position, being larger than the other two and not wanting to take the time to readjust the seat. My eye found the viewer and I worked my hands on the sensitive optical adjustor.

I WAS the chronicler of our threesome, as I have said. Brewster never had the patience, nor Professor Merrick the inclination. It fell to me to put our experiments and tests into words and yet I can honestly say that I did not know how to describe what I saw afterward when I sat writing in this journal.

At first look, what one perceived was not the heavenly bodies of the planet world but simply lines. There was a suggestion of color about the whole thing. I remember the thought came to me of technicolor. As I looked, the lines took on a certain irregular regularity, if I may be pardoned the contradiction. But it is impossible to describe the shades of color, the refinements of substance and shadow that I saw, that I registered, and yet that my mind was not able fully to catalog.

We took turns at the scope the rest of the night, and only the first streaks of dawn in the east took us from our vigil. Essentially the visual experiences of all of us coincided. Likewise our perplexity. We got through the day somehow, although I was thoroughly infected now with Brewster's feverish excitement. Professor Merrick, meanwhile, closeted himself in his study, buried in astronomical and scientific tomes—some so old that I recall the extraordinary care with which he had to turn the pages for fear of their crumbling, and as these books were long out of print, they were both priceless and irreplaceable.

For the rest of that week we caught but brief moments of sleep during the day. I think once when Brewster and I were in the small kitchen preparing something to



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eat—and it became a matter of sustaining life, for none of us had much appetite—I actually dozed off leaning against a cupboard. We spent our nights at the scope from the moment it was dark till dawn. Periodically, Professor Merrick tried different adjustments of the prisms and angles of his own lens, plus those of the monster Cruick's Mountain telescope.

WITH each readjustment, a new pattern opened up to us. I use that word because as yet we had not been able to interpret or even guess at what we saw. The passing of the days spurred our efforts. Merrick, for the first time in the years I'd known him, grew cranky. The reason was obvious. We were now well past the middle of the month. There were not many days before his experimental lens would have to be removed from the scope so that the regular meeting of the Danover astronomy group could be accommodated. If at first Brewster and I had wondered about Merrick's unwillingness to reveal to his own institution if not to the world, this remarkable lens he had perfected, we no longer did. This must be our secret. We were as jealous of it as the Professor.

The most exasperating part was that of all our suppositions, all our hopes of what it could prove to us, reveal to us, the one thing that had actually happened we had never expected: That we would not be able to interpret what we saw.

Merrick explained to us that the possible combination of adjustments with his new lens in juxtaposition with the Cruick's telescope lens was legion. We had had time to try but a few, and each one revealed new visual mysteries of color, of formation, of angle and shadow.

We were in our last week before the lens must be dismantled when Brewster and I, taking a turn around the observatory for a much-needed breath of air, heard Merrick shout from inside. There was still light in the sky. We thought it was too early for use of the scope. We went inside as quickly as we could, and Merrick met us at the door of the observatory chamber. The man was ashen, and as with a thing of ashes,

seemed to shake as ashes might in a wind. It is probably typical that my prosaic reaction was that his alarming state was due to the overwork that he had been doing. I did not guess the terrible thing that had been revealed to him. But Brewster with his more imaginative turn of mind, was a jump ahead.

"Professor, you've discovered something with the scope?"

Angus Merrick nodded, for words failed him. He gestured mutely towards the machine as though daring us to verify what he had seen. Brewster went quickly to the apparatus, Merrick at his side rechecking adjustments of the mechanism. Brewster looked, and I saw his hands and then his whole body become rigid. After long moments he got up, wet his lips and looked at the Professor wordlessly. Merrick nodded towards me.

"You try, John," he ordered. "Quickly, John, quickly!"

My heart was thundering as I sat in place and fixed my eye to that of the gigantic scope. We still did not know, I don't think any of us did, what exactly had caused the obscure to become the obvious. Whether it was the still-light of early evening or some new adjustment of the Professor's, we did not at that time know. Or care.

But this time there was no mistaking what the telescope showed. It was an eye—an open, staring eye . . . to be described by someone who must describe what his mind believes to be impossible, as *a human eye.* There were eyelashes. Furthermore, I could see—so help me—pits that were pores, lines that are those in skin from close up. There was the suggestion of shadowed something above the eye, and the corner of the scope under closer study proved it to be the eyebrow.

I turned away, looking from one to the other of my confrères. But they remained silent after reassuring themselves that I had seen what they had seen. We all took another turn at the scope. Then we trooped downstairs to Merrick's study.

The Professor spoke in measured terms almost as though trying to convince him-

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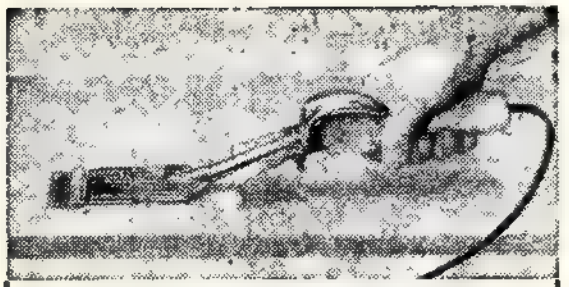

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self that a weighty scientific discussion could bring some more commonplace explanation to the incredible thing we had seen.

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"If we had succeeded in so doing, what is it we would see? No living man knows. On the other hand, this . . . this new development is quite inexplicable. It is almost anti-climatic. But we shall continue on in our investigations day and night until we have something to say to the world!"

FROM that moment on, with the few days left to us before the Danover astronomical class would meet again at the Cruick's Observatory, our work was unceasing. We kept a cauldron of coffee simmering in the lab; we stuffed our pockets with slices of bread and cheese, but there was no conscious thought of anything but the scope and that strange utterly preposterous thing it had revealed to us.

Merrick still considered that using the scope in the full light of day might be dangerous for us, but by mutual agreement, we decided to take the chance. We wore heavily constructed optical goggles, and with a round-the-clock study, our investigations continued on.

Movements of the telescope revealed more, but always pieces of the same whole. For there was no question of one thing. We were looking at what the human mind had to interpret as the features of some giant face. The implacable fact that a face must not, *could* not be up there in the sky in the outer reaches of our universe counted not one whit. The massive mon-

ster-ridge of a nose could be detected to what we could only call the east. Directly at a designation which might be called 1200, or straight up and down, was the valley where nose met cheek to run up eye-ward.

An abrupt adjustment of the scope to completely opposite positions, which we did not dare chance for a while for fear of losing our precious objective, ultimately showed a strange nebulous void impossible to describe. It was a *nothingness,* made up of *somethings;* made up of colors and smoke and shadow—kaleidoscopic. After a short search in every direction, we always came back to the entity of the eye, the face.

We began to explore pore by pore, fractional inch by fractional inch, the face and outward, as we could. Professor Merrick was almost incoherent in perplexity and agitation. A scientific man is appalled by what he cannot even remotely understand, much less explain. Brewster seemed almost in a trance, and I alone of the three thought of the idea of using some of our lower-power telescopes with which the observatory was equipped, to view the heavens in the direction of the eye. The others paid no heed to my efforts but I must admit I am used to such treatment.

My examination was profitless. The galaxies—stars and planets—were in their accustomed places. There was no hint of this monstrous thing we had discovered somewhere out there in space.

The Danover astronomy class was to meet next Tuesday. We had previously agreed that all day Monday would be sufficient to dismantle Merrick's special lens. Our incredible discovery changed everything, though. Brewster had first noticed and commented to the rest of us on a strange, shadowed something in a direction which I can only describe as easterly, with the eye as centerpoint. Through a meticulous manipulation of the telescopic controls, we were able to focus finally after hours of difficulty on this new objective. It was both as incredible and as easily understandable as the eye, the nose, the face. For this was—plainly—a finger. And next it were other fingers of a hand raised as

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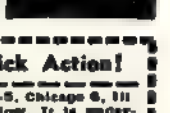

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though approximately parallel to nose or head as in the action of a salute. We puzzled over this, but it was no more astonishing than some of the other revelations.

IT WAS Merrick, in the early hours of Friday morning, who gave it an interpretation. Some of his priceless tomes had been brought up to the floor of the observatory. He had set up a rude army cot from the basement, placing it by the scope for convenience when those moments of cumulative fatigue overwhelmed him. The floor was strewn with papers, the papers covered with minute figures and equations.

I think Brewster and Merrick drew a bit away from me then. My knowledge was not the equal of theirs, and although I had seen everything they had seen, my feet were still more surely on the ground, for as I have said, Brewster seemed in a trance, and Merrick, through the strain of this dreadful period, was no longer what could be called entirely normal. But then what genius is entirely normal—and certainly Angus Merrick earns that genius title if any man has in the history of our universe that was even then in its last numbered hours.

I remember Merrick smiled when he said it to Brewster. He was sitting at one end of the cot, Ethan at the other, books and papers between them. I had had another go at the scope. The finger fascinated me. The pattern of its prints would have done justice to an FBI file. Merrick's voice brought my eyes away from the telescope.

What he said to Brewster then, I did not believe; I *could* not believe, because up to that moment and through that moment, I insisted that there must be an explanation that would fit in properly with our little valley at Danover, with beloved upper New England, with our world and all the things we understand.

I heard every word Merrick said, mark you, but I did not believe. His words, and I know now, brilliant interpretation were inacceptable to me, for of our threesome, I was not only the least scientific—I was the most normal, and of all the things in

the world that denies normalcy, that defies all the things we have been taught and believed in since we were delivered of our mothers—this was the most incredible and impossible of all.

Friday and Saturday were days of unbelievable excitement. It was at the end of Saturday that Brewster and Merrick suddenly seemed to shun the telescope, and I, still a disbeliever, took to it more. Again and again I eyed and examined the fixed and now-familiar objects we had studied so many, many times before in these fateful weeks—the eye, unblinking and staring, even its colors discernible; the lashes and eyebrow; the skin; the long mountain-range of the nose, and then with a quick adjustment of the great scope to the east, the fingers, the hand. I tried to tell myself that the prints in those fingers were not deeper ridges now, for that would verify some of Merrick's hypothesis. I tried to say that that was a trick of my eye, a new or better angle of the scope.

I was alone in the observatory for some hours there, and when I came from it, it was dark outside. It was then that shockingly, terrifyingly, I saw the grotesque thing hanging in our great room, swaying silently, mockingly.

It was Brewster. Numb with horror I cut him down, but the intelligence that I had admired so, the personality of the man who had been friends with me for so long was gone forever with the precious life-spark.

It took me some time to find Merrick. I called and I chased around. I came upon him finally in the basement laboratory. He was crouched in a corner, and perhaps strange to say, he provided a much greater shock to me than even poor Brewster, upstairs now on the couch where I had gently laid him—for Professor Merrick was no longer rational.

I AM writing all this out of compulsion and also from a sense of duty. A moment ago—and it is the middle hours of the night—I was attracted back to the observatory floor by the sounds there, but I was too late. Before I could reach him,

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Merrick had irreparably damaged his lens, the goal of three years' work. He had used both an acetylene torch and some explosive, which was still on hand from construction of the observatory. As I say, he did his work well, and I fear that even some of the great lenswork of the original telescope may have received damage.

Strange how strong he was. I am big and thirty years his junior, yet I could not hold Angus Merrick by words or physical force. He tore loose from me and ran out into the stormy night after his destructive work on the Cruick's scope was finished. I ran after him but the man was beside himself. He disappeared in the snow and finally I had to return here alone. Overwork, of course, must explain these terrible happenings. I shall keep this record only for myself and say nothing, *nothing* to anyone else. Certainly Merrick and Brewster are tragic victims of their own enthusiasm and intensity. They are heroes in their way. No word of mine shall besmirch them. That was my resolve as dawn came. For still *I did not believe.*

The light comes first to Cruick's Mountain, high as it is above the rest of the world there at Danover. I watched it come for a long time and remorse shook me. I suppose I had been too dulled for a while with my own fatigue, but I broke down suddenly and sobbed like a child. I knew I must get overshoes and coat on soon and go out and look again for Professor Merrick. The snow of the night before had slackened. I think I knew then that Merrick would be beyond recall, but as soon as I could muster enough strength, I dressed for the out-of-doors.

I got to the observatory door and opened it. Then it was that some compulsive thing made me go back for this record book that I had already secreted. I took it and slipped it into the pocket of my overcoat.

Automatically I noted the observatory clock as I left again. It was nine a.m.

Down below the early morning church services would be nearly finished. I would see President Fairchild and discuss this with him. People would have to be sent to find Professor Merrick if he had not already found his way into the village.

I was not ten yards from the observatory when I noticed it. The dawn had changed into brighter, early morning light. The snow lying down the slope of the hill and across the neat valley lent brightness to the sky as it blossomed into full light.

But there in the east was darkness—a strange gloom which set my mind working and my heart to pounding. I ran then, as fast and as hard as I could, down Cruick's

Mountain, away from the observatory, away from that gigantic scope that pointed from its roof into the sky towards the east from whence came that creeping gloom. Down the hill on which I'd skied so many times, on which I had tobogganed with Brewster and other acquaintances of my undergraduate days. I fell once, twice, several times and the record book skittered from a pocket. I clutched it in my hands and continued on. The white-steepled church was beneath me now, and I could see the people coming out, still small for I was some distance away, but there, unmistakably, was Dr. Fairchild in the lead.

Halfway down the hill with the snow beneath my churning legs turned whiter by comparison with the ever-darkening sky, I *believed*. I *believed* as suddenly as though I'd been slapped, and that is an apt phrase. Now I could understand the force of this terrible thing that had killed Brewster and driven Merrick insane.

FOR to know the whole of civilization, its eons of evolution, its centuries of struggle, its heartbreak of races and nations —and to know now the absolute uselessness, the obscene, meaningless truth of it all. *That this universe is no more than a cinder on the face of some great being of another dimension, of another time cycle—unbelievably slower, more ponderous than ours—and that we have lived our eons in the moment that that cinder lodged and lived there on the incredibly massive human organism of this Great one . . . that in the moment it took for that cinder to itch and for a giant hand to come up as we slap a mosquito or brush dust out of an eye. For that hand to come up and scrape us away, annihilate us, this universe, its pathetic, miserable doomed people. Only an instant—all of us, all we know, all we have hoped for—in the eternity of this Great One.*

I *believed* it as I came tumbling down the mountain, for the darkness in the east was final proof, was the next-to-last stage of our universal obliteration, the doom of our pathetic hopes of immortality, immortality at least if not for ourselves, for our

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images, our world and universe. I *believed* as I spurned the more circuitous path and struck out over the treacherous, ice-sheathed cliffs that led directly downward. Bursting with this dread knowledge, I knew nothing but the imperative necessity of sharing this awful truth, this fate with others. . . .

"I THOUGHT Chaplain Brooks delivered a very fine sermon today," Dr. Fairchild chatted with his faculty members as they emerged from the chapel. Wind ran into the valley from the east; it moaned and shrilled in the nude trees, tugged at church-going hats and Sunday-best mufflers.

The president of Danover raised the collar of his coat quickly. It seemed even colder than earlier in the morning. He and his wife had hoped to take a ride that afternoon with the visiting provost of a nearby college. But the day had suddenly turned chill and ominous. He frowned at the threatening sky.

Then somebody said something, and he looked up, up at Cruick's Mountain. There was a figure, a black bobbing moving thing tearing down the incline. It fell, to pick itself up again on the slopes, and somebody at Fairchild's side murmured, "Good heavens! He'll kill himself running down the mountain like that! I wonder what's up?.

The figure waved its arms wildly for a moment in their direction and then with that very action seemed to lose its balance, to fall pinwheeling, over and over, down and down. The little group stood silent, shocked, and then they rushed forward.

"Whoever it was," panted one of the professors at Fairchild's side, "he never could have survived that fall, poor devil."

They hurried forward with the puffing gait of men not accustomed to running, and even as they did, the snow seemed to become brighter and the day darker. The heavens were streaked with fast-fading brightness. And before the growing gloom clouds fled away as though afraid of tarrying in the sky over Danover.

They reached him finally—John Douglas, lying there twisted and broken from his fall. He must have died instantly. There was a book at his side and it was open. Dr. Fairchild picked it up and started to read the first few sentences. But under the sudden canopy of dreadful darkness unrolling across the sky above him, he was unable to read further.

THE SIXTH GARGOYLE

(*Continued from page* 38)

Ter Horst could see the white haired old Burgomeister clearly. His silver chain of office hung around his neck, over the black velvet robe. The Burgomeister caught sight of Ter Horst and laughed loudly. His laugh got more and more intense until it shook his whole body. Ter Horst was about to call out

when the Burgomeister lost his footing on the slippery stonework and tottered.

He fell a few feet and then his body was snapped up sharply. Ter Horst saw that his chain of office had caught around the stone figure of the sixth gargoyle. As the moon went behind the clouds once more Ter Horst could see the figure of the Burgomeister swinging back and forth in the wind, his cloak flapping out behind him like the wings of a bat.

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1. The names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher SHORT STORIES, INC., 9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y. Editor, D. McIlwraith, 9 Rockefeler Plaza, New York 20, N. Y. Managing editor, none. Business manager, William J. Delaney, 9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

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(*Signed*) W. J. DELANEY, Publisher.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 29th day of September, 1950.

[SEAL]

(*Signed*) WALTER J. LOTZ.

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